EXPERIMENT IN END TIME APOSTASY:

THE WALK
of
JOHN ROBERT STEVENS

The History, Beliefs, and Spiritual Dynamics of a Christian Cult

by

Woodrow Nichols

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There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. – Romans 8:1.

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Table of Contents

Preface		**Page 5**
Prologue:	**The Violent Take it by Force**	**Page 7**
Chapter 1:	**The Call to Walk With God**	**Page 13**
Chapter 2:	**The Latter Rain Crisis**	**Page 21**
Chapter 3:	**The Early Walk – Part One**	**Page 35**
Chapter 4:	**The Early Walk – Part Two**	**Page 43**
Chapter 5:	**The Early Walk – Part Three**	**Page 49**
Chapter 6:	**The First Principles**	**Page 57**
Chapter 7:	**Witchcraft**	**Page 69**
Chapter 8:	**The Secret Doctrine**	**Page 77**
Chapter 9:	**The Split of 1967**	**Page 95**
Chapter 10:	**The Step Into the Day of Revelation**	**Page 109**
Chapter 11:	**Silver and Gold Have I None**	**Page 117**
Chapter 12:	**Loosing the Apostle**	**Page 127**
Chapter 13:	**A Plausible Theory**	**Page 145**
Epilogue:	**The End Time Apostasy**	**Page 149**
Appendix A:	**Physical Signs in the Body**	**Page 153**
Appendix B:	**Deprogramming: A Personal View**	**Page 155**

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Preface

> *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many . . . . Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.* – Jesus, Matthew 24:4-5, 23-25.

The Walk of John Robert Stevens is not a denomination or a church in the usual sense of the word. It is, to be precise, a network, or loose federation, of small independent churches that have willingly submitted themselves to the spiritual authority and direction of John Robert Stevens, their apostle – the apostle of the Kingdom Age. He is the tie that binds the Walk together. As his ex-wife, Martha, succinctly put it in her divorce statement: "He is, in essence, the church himself."[1]

In many ways, the Walk is virtually indistinguishable from the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement, sometimes referred to as Neo-Pentecostalism. Although there are many opposing doctrines and beliefs within this wide spectrum of American Christianity, there is one mark that characterizes them all: "The abiding possibility and importance of the supernatural element . . . . particularly as contained in the manifestation of the Spirit."[2] Most of these groups call themselves "full gospel," that is, they believe that all of the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament have been restored as a result of the latter rain of God's Spirit during the Last Days (Joel 2:23-32). These include the nine gifts of the Spirit: tongues (glossolalia), the interpretation of tongues, the discernment of spirits, miracles, healing, faith, prophecy, the word of knowledge, and the word of wisdom; as well as the five gift ministries: apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher, and pastor.

However, the Walk goes beyond the simple restored gifts and ministries of the New Testament, for that dealt with only the Church Age. The Walk has received a higher revelation, received and proclaimed by its apostle, John Robert Stevens. In essence, this revelation states that the Walk is the final move of God's Spirit in this age and the sneak preview of the Kingdom Age. In fact, those who are members of the Walk can expect to experience the powers of the resurrection body in this life, in this body of flesh. The Walk, with John Robert Stevens at its head, will usher in the Kingdom Age. Thus, the Walk is to the Church what the Church was to the Old Testament.

As such, the Walk heralds a whole new dispensation in American Christianity. Since John Robert Stevens was called by God and given this new revelation (largely derived from the Old Testament), he is not to be misunderstood as simply an apostle as Peter, John, or Paul were apostles, that is, apostles of the Church. John Robert Stevens is an apostle of a whole new order – the Kingdom Age. And as the Church Age (the old order) had its own revelation, recorded in the New Testament, so the Kingdom Age has its own revelation, recorded in the words of its prophet, John Robert Stevens. His word is the living word and is taped and transcribed whenever he speaks. His word reveals the hidden secrets in both the Old and New Testaments and without his revelation one cannot really understand the Scripture at all. In essence, then, the living word of John Robert Stevens is the epitome of progressive revelation – it is regarded as equal to or

even superior to the Bible and is, in fact, a Third Testament in God's dealings with the human race.

But this is not the whole story: the Walk itself is the Living Word in the flesh – it is Jesus Christ on earth. Thus, as Jesus in His earthly body ushered in the Church Age, so, in His present earthly body, the Walk, He will usher in the Kingdom Age. This means quite simply that the Walk is not just the Bride of Christ, it is Christ! This is perhaps one of the main revelations that the Walk offers to its members. In other words, the Walk offers more than just a congregation of redeemed humanity: it offers divinity.

Thus, the Walk is perhaps one of the clearest omens of the great apostasy of the Last Days (II Thessalonians 2:3; I Timothy 4;1-3; II Timothy 3:1-13; II Peter 2:1-22; Jude 4-19; Revelation 2:13-15; 13:11-18). Instead of the apostle of the new order, John Robert Stevens is unfortunately, a false apostle, a false prophet, a false teacher, and the Walk is a false movement of God (i.e., a cult or Christian aberration).

For this reason alone the Walk warrants our serious attention and study. However, it also provides a classic case study of both how a seemingly independent group of churches is controlled by an outside hierarchy (a phenomenon that typifies the whole spectrum of Neo-Pentecostalism), as well as a stern lesson of how occultism, spiritism, and demonism penetrate a Christian sect.

In this study we hope to provide more than just an expose of a cult flourishing within our midst. We hope as well to help answer some of the more perplexing questions facing the American Church today: What distinguishes a true movement of God from a false one? Are there any clear and trustworthy Biblical guidelines for the discernment of the spirit of truth and the spirit of error? Is the fact of inner spiritual experience and signs following alone, conclusive proof of the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit?

The answers to these questions need to be proclaimed if we are to keep ourselves from the strong delusion of the Last Days. Now, as we race helter-skelter into the great End Time apostasy, is the time for true Biblical discernment. It is a matter of life and death.

> *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved.* – Jesus, Matthew 24:11-13.

Notes:

1. Declaration of Martha Stevens in divorce papers as filed with Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County, case no. D973296 (2 NOV 78), p. 2.

2. David Harrel, Jr., *All Things Are Possible* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 11.

Prologue:

The Violent Take it by Force

Grace Chapel of South Gate[1]

Grace Chapel is an unobtrusive building, resting on the corner of 9641 Virginia Avenue, in South Gate, California, an older Los Angeles neighborhood. The inside is small compared to most churches, with perhaps 300 seats, separated by two aisles that run down to a small raised platform in front. In front of the platform the hardcore members have gathered before the afternoon service for violent intercession, a form of intense spiritual warfare where the spiritual atmosphere is prepared for John Robert Stevens, the apostle of the Kingdom to bring forth the living word. All spiritual impasses must be overcome, nothing must hinder the apostle in his crucial role as the most important eschatological character in Biblical prophecy. All demons, witches, devil triads, Nephilim spirits, and any other enemy who dared to raise himself up against God's Anointed, must be subjugated and cast out. The apostle must be free to bring forth the word. How else would he be able to breakthrough into the highest plane of revelation, the Kingdom, and usher in the new age? He could not do it alone. That was not God's way. Was it not their duty, their mission, to intercede for him? Was it not their ministry to fight the forces of darkness on the spiritual plane?

Yes, like the mighty men of David, they knew their role. It was no place for the weak at heart. It was war, a matter of life or death. They must press violently into the Kingdom. They were on the front lines and they were awaiting the whistle to go over the top. It was 9 July 1978 and the apostle was going to speak to them after a long absence.

Violent Intercession

One of the leaders, the pastor of the Redlands church, lifted up his voice above the noise of everyone else's intercessory prayers and shouted, "We violently submit to you, Lord Jesus!"

Immediately, the rest ceased their individual efforts and gave affirmation, "Yes, Lord!" The real war had begun.

> "We resist the Devil and everything that would stand against your perfect victory!" continued the leader.
>
> "Yes, Lord! We demand it, Lord Jesus!" echoed the mighty host of David.

Then a woman with a high shrill voice: "Lord, we release an explosion tonight! We loose an intense pressing in on each one of us!" More affirmation.

Another voice: "We press into your presence, Lord; we press into your Spirit!" followed by another: "We're not content to just go through this service. Everything that would be a hindrance to the apostolic ministry, we loose it tonight!"

"Amen! Yes, God!"

By this time most of them are bobbing up and down, totally immersed into the battle, oblivious of all outside stimuli. Some are jumping hard down on the floor, as if stomping unseen forces underfoot. Others are banging their fists into their hands or clutching their fists and shaking them in front of them as if gathering together their energies or taunting the enemy. After all, violent intercession is the total expression of the soul, the spirit, and the body. It was a long drawn out battle, but one they had fought many times before. The intercession grew even more intense as the time for the apostle to speak grew near.

"We declare tonight, Lord, that we're not going to be part of this age . . . . that tonight, Brother Stevens would be released to a new level. Lord, that tonight is just one more progressive step for each one of us, in the name of the Lord!"

"Yes! Right! Yes, O Jesus! Amen!"

"Release the man of God tonight!"

"We choose to be Timothy's tonight, O God!"

A hysterical female voice: "WE REBUKE ALL PASSIVITY!"

Chorus: "We rebuke it!"

"We're not looking for a Timothy movement; we're looking to be Timothy's, in the name of the Lord!"

"WE HAVE THE RIGHT TONIGHT!"

Then the original speaker brought the first round to a close:

"We prophesy the release of the word tonight! We prophesy the release of the word and authority! We declare the man of God is not alone tonight! We prophesy against the Nephilim spirit! We loose the word tonight!"

This was followed by an immediate frenzy of affirmations, melding into a tumult of tongues, shouts, and screams of victory. Then they broke up into small groups and continued the conflict in smaller engagements. This is soon ended and they are led in violent singing, backed up by a loud overpowering organ, snare and conga drums. The music is called "Jubilee Music," and does not try to hide its martial spirit. The words deal mostly with the mighty men of David, with sounds and spoils of warfare, with the saints judging the whole earth.

When the proper level of excitement is attained, they eagerly enter into another round of violent intercession, marked by extreme shouting, proclamation, and prayer. They give no quarter to the enemy. However, this round is brief, cut off by the sound of the organ leading them into singing in tongues, more Jubilee Music, handclapping and the noise of tambourines.

Suddenly, the organ stops. As if on cue the people take their seats amid a low hubbub of voices. There is almost a hush as the apostle, John Robert Stevens, comes to the podium.

The Apostle

He is a big man with a full, bushy beard, bushy gray hair, and a cherubic face like Santa Claus – a face filled with sincerity and authority. He has big arms and is wearing a short-sleeve, white V-neck sport shirt, unbuttoned, revealing a burly hairy chest. He is a masculine man and wants no one to doubt it. In fact, he is almost a dead ringer for Ernest Hemingway just off the boat after an invigorating day of deep-sea fishing.

He commands the attention of everyone. He leans forward on the podium, staring, making sure he gets the full attention he deserves. His face is, however, flushed red and his eyes are not completely focused. He looks as if he has just been through a terrible ordeal. He appears almost crushed under the weight and responsibility of his calling.

He speaks. He has a deep voice, full of brass and power. He insults his wife and gets a laugh from the audience. Everyone knows that his wife, Martha, has been a great detriment to his ministry. The apostle shades his eyes with his hand as he looks out over the rows of seats, as if he is looking into the harsh glare of the noonday sun. Martha does not appear to be offended. She will, however, file for divorce before the year is over.

He begins his sermon. It is on the subject of self-condemnation. For the last forty-eight hours he has gone through a heavy time of self-condemnation. A stillness fills the room. Everyone understands that a strong Nephilim spirit has attacked him, meaning that their intercession has not been effective; they have not been faithful enough in their mission.

The apostle lets the implications sink in. Then, he tells the story of Simon of Cyrene. He thumbs through his battered, well-used Bible slowly, for dramatic effect. He finds the passage he is seeking. Simon, he says, was black, and if we ere to use the derogatory word for him, we would call him a nigger. He looks behind him to a black man, seated on one of the chairs reserved for the restored ministries of the Kingdom. The black man nods his head, not quite sure what Stevens is driving at.

But the apostle does not keep everyone in the dark. Raising his voice slightly, he tells his followers that Simon is the archetypical "nigger" of the world – the man who bears the burdens of others . . . . the man who bears the cross of Jesus Christ. For the remainder of the sermon, Stevens refers to Simon as a nigger.

He bangs his fist on the podium to regain the total attention of his audience. But before he can tell what has so angered him, he begins to weep. With consummate skill he weaves everyone into his plot. The apostle needs the people to bear ***his*** cross. Like Jesus, he cannot press into Kingdom without the help of his cross-bearers. How will he ever break through if he doesn't have a nigger to help bear his spiritual burdens? How can he even hope to fulfill the will of God for this age if his own followers will not bear his cross? When are they going to stop fooling around and get down to business?

There are two kinds of people in this world, he says. There are those who are falling under the load of the cross and there are those who are willing to lend a hand. He stops and looks over his shoulder to the restored ministries. One by one he looks into the eyes of the men who have been called, who have been anointed to bring the Walk into higher revelation. Then he looks back at the congregation and humbly bows his head. "Amen," he says. "That was the word of the Lord."

However, he is not yet done. Perhaps he surprised by his own brevity. He leads everyone into praise and singing in tongues. The organ joins in. He leads them into prayer. He lifts up his voice, "Don't be condemned; lift up one another!" Loud praying follows this appeal.

The Restored Ministries

It is now time for the restored ministries to confirm the word. In the Walk, everything must have the appearance of being in accordance with Scripture. Therefore, the prophets must confirm everything said by Stevens. One of the prophets steps up to the podium and says,

> "Stevens is the firstfruits ministry. Unless he dies daily and is resurrected everyday, the body of Christ does not come forth. We must intercede twenty-four hours to bring forth the man of God, the firstfruits ministry."

Stevens nods his head. "That's true," he says. "That's true."

The other ministries step forward, each one trying to outdo the others in heaping praise and honor upon Stevens and his ministry, as if they are jockeying for positions in the coming world order.

Stevens regains the podium. "I haven't preached in South Gate for quite awhile. Tonight I gave you a dandy, didn't I?"

A voice in the congregation: "We receive it!"

Stevens: "Receive it?"

Congregation: Yes!"

Stevens: "We're coming to a day where there's no distinction between clergy and man. You better listen to that, because that thing dies hard." There is silence. Stevens looks at them and says, "Everybody said, Amen?"

Congregation: "Amen!"

Stevens: "I greet you. Timothy greets all his Timothy's. Amen."

Congregation: "Amen!"

Stevens: "That was a good word." A young man gives prophetic confirmation, then Stevens leads his Timothy's into a song, "I will walk with thee my Lord . . . ."

This is followed by more music, more praise, and more singing in tongues. "Have you ever been in a service where – that meets you closer to your heart?" asks Stevens. "Reach up to the Lord!"

Then comes the offering. The apostle gives a pitch for a special autographed edition of the ***First Principles***, a series of studies he wrote back in 1958, a vague statement of his theology for beginning disciples. There are only twenty-five of these special editions left. Stevens asks who would like them, taking a show of hands to make sure there won't be a rush for them after the service. But only ten hands go up. He keeps the offer going, asking for a show of hands, until, reluctantly, twenty members have offered to buy one. Then he takes a special offering for the Living Word, Inc., the publishing and tape ministry of the Walk, the one responsible for recording the Third Testament of John Robert Stevens.

He is almost through. "This has been a good service," he says. "But it would be good to take in another one. Amen." What he means is that as many people as possible should drive up for the evening service at the Church of the Living Word, the Walk church in Sepulveda. The service is now over. A select few gather together with Stevens to ride in his van with him to Sepulveda. The rest gather their stuff together and leave. Everyone is aware that an important event has just taken place: God has brought forth His word to His people through His servant John Robert Stevens. Even though there is a sense of victory, it is tainted with shame. The congregation is not doing their job. The Kingdom is being prolonged because of their unfaithfulness. They have to do a better job if they ever hope to press the apostle into a whole new plane of revelation – into the Kingdom of God.

Afterword

What has just taken place is a common occurrence at the church in South Gate. Some of the churches in the Walk are not as radical as this, but, after all, South Gate is where the Walk began. A casual observer may think that the whole meeting was nothing but a pep rally in a lunatic asylum. But this would be a premature judgment. The Walk is the culmination of a long historical process of error into American Christianity. It mirrors the best and worst of many segments of the church today. It did not grow out of a vacuum. John Robert Stevens is not mad, nor is he a con man, taking advantage of the gullibility of his flock. Even though he had done things that are both spiritually and physically corrupt, he is sincere in what he believes. He has dedicated his whole life to his calling, living most of his days in poverty as the result of his remaining true to his revelation. He is, however, wrong and a teacher of error. This was not always so. To really understand the Walk, and what is happening in many segments of Neo-Pentecostalism today, we must study the history of John Robert Stevens within it proper religious context. Then, and only then, can we pass the necessary judgment upon it.

Notes:

1. The P.M. meeting on 9 July 1978 at South Gate, California, was taped and transcribed by the SCP.

Chapter One

The Call to Walk With God

His Beginning

John Robert Stevens was born on a small farm in Story County, near Ames, Iowa, on 7 August 1919, just a short distance from the small farm where his father had been born. His father, William J. Stevens, had been the son of a preacher and would himself gain some prominence in the early history of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. One hour after he was born to his mother, Eva Kay, his father dedicated him to the Lord. [1]

It was only right that John Robert should be born in Iowa. Since the early days of western expansion, the state of Iowa had been a stronghold of rugged Fundamentalism. Both the Holiness and Pentecostal Movements found rich fertile soil among its gentle rolling plains. Independent, local churches sprouted up like new wheat over the countryside. This rural, religious environment formed the basis of John Robert's world-view.

In fact, the early life and background of John Robert take on an almost mythical quality in the true western tradition. His family attended a Methodist Church and a Church of Christ during his formative years. The Bible was the diet and mainstay of the Stevens' household. Even when they had to move to Newton, Iowa, as the result of William's employment with Maytag, the family was deeply involved with a series of tent meetings a small independent church began holding for seventeen consecutive weeks. William became actively involved with the new congregation that formed as the result of these meetings, calling it the Full Gospel Church. Later, it became affiliated with the Foursquare Church.[2]

At the age of ten, John Robert had a serious ear ailment (a double mastoid infection) and had to have an operation so that it could be lanced. It was a very dangerous operation because one of his ears had already been lanced three times and the other one had been lanced twice. The doctors were worried that when they lanced this new infection it might rupture inward and kill him. The operation was successful, and through prayer and faith in God, John Robert was healed and lived (his hearing is still affected in his left ear, the one that received the most lancings).

Soon after his recovery he attended the funeral of a young girl he had known. Her family had moved into a new farm and the little girl had gone upstairs to play. She had found some wheat on the floor and eaten it. It was rat poison and the young girl died a long, horrible death. John Robert would never forget the spiritual lesson that he learned from this incident: Satan's lies are like rat poison – 99% wheat and 1% poison.[3] Unfortunately, John Robert himself would eventually fall prey to the same misfortune.

When John Robert was about 11 years old, his family moved to Los Angeles so that his father could attend the Foursquare Bible School, known as Life Bible College. During this period John Robert never passed up an opportunity to go and hear a new preacher. He loved to hear new revelations and mysteries uncovered. One of his greatest experiences was to go and hear the

famous Smith Wiggelsworth preach when he was 13. Wiggelsworth was a major influence on the young mind of John Robert Stevens.[4]

In 1933, William moved his family back to Washington, Iowa. Washington would always be home to John Robert from then on. William started a Foursquare church in Washington and within a year, at the age of 14, John Robert began preaching.[5] He was soon holding evangelistic meetings in nearby Gladwyn and leading the Sunday night "happy hour" at the YMCA in Washington. During this period of his life, the gospel was the center of everything he did. He went through ten-cent cardboard bound New Testaments faster than he wore out his shoes. To make them last as long as possible, he would cover them with scraps from discarded oilskin table cloths.[6] He totally immersed himself in the Word of God to show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). It was during this time that the young warrior for God had the vision that changed the course of his life.

His Vision

The story of the early vision of John Robert Stevens is legendary in the Walk. It is perhaps the single most important fact in understanding his mind. The main substance of the story goes like this: One evening, when John Robert was 15 or 16, he preached a powerful anointed message to the congregation in his father's church. After everyone else had left, he locked up the building and began to walk home. However, after he had walked a few steps he realized that he had left his coat inside. He had been so high in the Spirit he hadn't even noticed the cold outside! He re-entered the church and walked up the middle aisle to the pulpit where he had left his coat. Suddenly, halfway up the aisle, he was struck down to floor by an unseen hand. His eyes were opened and he saw a panorama of his future ministry laid out before him. Whether he saw the Lord Himself isn't clear from any of the accounts, but he was told that he would take the gospel of the Kingdom to many nations and was told in what order they would receive his message. He was to be the apostle of the Kingdom. As Stevens himself relates it:

> It's always been a haunting thing to me. It was very, very real to me. Of course, I was quite young, but when God gave that word to me, I could tell you of being transported in this vision – I was transported in the Spirit. I preached to many peoples; language was never a problem. I could speak fluently the language of wherever I went. It was just a fantastic thing. and the people began to gather, in jungles or cities – they'd be drawn together. and I'd just come to them and preach to them. The thing was so real that it lasted for a number of hours for me. And then, of course, in my youth, I said, "That's my call to preach."[7]

There is, unfortunately, no valid method for determining whether this was a true or false vision, or whether indeed it really even happened. However, his early lifestyle and the details of the vision would seem to indicate that he did in fact have a real experience that deeply touched his heart. His interpretation of the vision may be open to debate, the vision itself probably took place in much the same way as he related it. In fact, the substance of the vision, if true, is a terrible indictment against him, for midway through his life, he changed the path he was on and went against the will of God.

His Early Education

One can well imagine the effect an experience would have on the mind of such a dedicated youth like John Robert Stevens. He fully pursued a life of active ministry, accepting all the burdens that such a life required. His education that followed may not mean much according to our standards today, but it was certainly acceptable within the framework of Pentecostalism before the cold cloak of denominationalism smothered its innocence.

It is extremely difficult to pin down with any degree of accuracy the next 10-12 years of John Robert's life. Thus, we can only deal with verifiable events and leave the rest to the dim mists of historical silence. As mentioned earlier, John Robert had been studying the Bible with a zeal worthy of Samuel the Prophet. At the same time that he was attending high school and holding the evangelistic meetings in Gladwyn, he was enrolled in a mail correspondence course with the Chicago Bible School in Chicago, Illinois. There is a slight mystery about this school, which has caused some to even doubt its existence. But it must be remembered that this was in the age of new spiritual revelations and before the Pentecostal churches in America (which have been largely accepted within the evangelical fold today) had organized into denominations. It was a time when Pentecostals moved as they believed the Spirit was directing them outside the control of a central bureaucracy.

However, some of the mystery of the Chicago Bible School can be cleared up if it was in fact an earlier name for the American Bible School, also located in Chicago, since John Robert was purported to have attended this one as well. This is the school that William Stevens remembers his son taking mail courses from, and though he can't remember how far John Robert progressed in it, he told Ed Remitz, a reporter for the Sacramento Union, that he received a "theology doctorate" from it. Unfortunately, the mystery will never be totally resolved because there are no records anywhere showing that John Robert ever graduated from it, or, in fact, whether or not it even existed. As John Robert told Remitz in another interview, "It certainly wasn't much of a school."[8]

According to Todd B. Ehrenborg, staff researcher for the Christian Research Institute (CRI)of Anaheim, California, John Robert received his first ordination from a Dr. Cortkamp of the Full Gospel Temple of Moline, Illinois, before it became affiliated with the Foursquare church. The date given was 15 September 1937, making John Robert 18 years old.[9] Stevens mentions this event on a tape entitled, "Gift of Miracles," but says he was only seventeen at the time.[10] Since the ordination reputedly took place just a month following his eighteenth birthday, it easy to account for the discrepancy. Stevens also mentions on the tape that Dr. Cortkamp (even though he does not mention him by name) had a great calling and healing ministry in the early years of Pentecostalism. Dr. Cortkamp is alleged to have gone into a hospital and lay his hands on every single patient, healing each and every one of their infirmities. The hospital was vacant the next morning. However, according to William Stevens, even though his son was ordained by Dr. Cortkamp, John Robert was never associated with the Full Gospel Temple of Moline in any way.

Many might at this point shrug their shoulders in disdain over an ordination of this kind. It certainly doesn't carry much weight according to the present standards and traditions in American Christianity. But within the early days of Pentecostalism, an ordination of this kind

was not only perfectly acceptable, it was required. Everyone knew that in the New Testament, ministries were transferred by the laying on of hands by one who had spiritual authority. In the days of the latter days outpouring of the Spirit (the latter rain of Joel 2), why should it be any different? In this light, even Stevens' "theology doctorate" would have been regarded as a major accomplishment in study and preparation for the ministry. We must always be careful before we make hasty judgments that are quick to condemn those who may not toe the line according to our own denomination or tradition. As Richard Quebedeaux perceptively points out in *The New Charismatics*:

> Pentecostalism was a highly democratic movement from the beginning. Rooted in antisacramentalism, there was never much distinction made between clergy and laity in the Pentecostal concept of ministry . . . . Lack of formal education was no bar to ordination, although Pentecostalism established its own Bible schools in the fundamentalist fashion (e.g., Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri; and LIFE College, Los Angeles). A sense of "calling" was often enough to warrant local or congregational ordination.[11]

But even in this milieu John Robert was perceptive enough to realize that he would need more education if he ever hoped to fulfill his vision. By 1939, he was attending the Life Bible College in Los Angeles. Life Bible records show that John Robert attended three semesters, between 1939-1940. Six completed semesters were necessary for graduation.

But even though John Robert never graduated from Life Bible College, his life in Los Angeles was not spent in idle listing. He went from church to church, wherever they would receive, all over the Los Angeles area, holding evangelistic meetings and preaching the "full gospel." It was during his days at Life Bible that he met his wife to be, Martha Mickelson, who had previously graduated from the same college. Martha was two years his senior but they soon fell in love and were married on 21 July 1939, in Burbank, California. John Robert was one month shy of being 20.

His Early Ministry

The newlyweds moved back to Washington, Iowa, and worked with William Stevens for a short time. It was during this period that William had broken away from the Foursquare church and started his own in an old school building. William was opposed to the whole spirit of denominationalism, seeing it as part of the Babylonian religious system in the book of Revelation. He called his new church the Christian Tabernacle. William was glad that his son felt the same way. As he told Michael L. Sondergard of the Iowa City Press Citizen: "My son has followed in my footsteps and has really seen it spread."[12]

"It" was, of course, the movement of God that keeps progressing onward so that it never falls into bondage and deep sleep of Laodicean complacency that is so characteristic of denominationalism. William, in his own way, was correct about his son. John Robert was just as independent as his father, even more so. Even though he toyed with both the Foursquare and Assemblies of God churches in later years, he never truly submitted to their authority. This was both a plus and a minus for him, because in his final moments with the Assemblies of God, he

rejected their counsel – counsel that proved to be sound and Biblical. John Robert Stevens, in a need to stay independent and true to his interpretation of his vision, went on to found *The Walk*, a tragic consequence of his disobedience to both men and God.

But, back to his early ministry, John Robert was extremely busy during the Second World War in the Midwest. He started three churches in the state of Illinois alone, spending the longest amount of time in a small independent church he founded in Nevada, Iowa. During his two years in Nevada, his first daughter was born. However, by 1942, he was attending a Roman Catholic college at the University of Dayton, Ohio. While attending this college between the months of September 1942 to April 1943, he helped start the Christian Tabernacle School in Dayton.

By March of 1944, he was back pastoring a small church in Oklahoma City, which like many of those that preceded it, eventually became affiliated with the Foursquare Church. However, by the end of April he was back in Washington, Iowa, working his father once again, who, since 1941, had incorporated the Christian Tabernacle into a small, non-profit religious corporation known as the Church of the Living Word. John Robert aptly summed up his early evangelistic career to Ed Remitz by saying that, "it all added up to an Irish stew."[13]

In His Father's Footsteps

John Robert moved his family to California in 1946 so that he could help his wife's parents, who were in need of aid. They moved into a house in a Los Angeles residential area known as Willowbrook (at 125th and South Central), which divides Watts from Compton.[14] During this time John Robert renewed some of his old contacts and continued doing what he had always done, that is, preach the gospel wherever he could. As his wife, Martha, describes this period:

> In 1946 we traveled to California and settled in Compton in order to pursue our ministry. My Husband [sic] was a free-lance evangelist, and we made our living by giving sermons and counseling. In essence we are Fundamentalists and have not been associated with any established church.[15]

While not wholly true (John Robert and his wife were both associated with the Foursquare and assemblies of God Churches for brief periods of time), Martha does describe the one essential aspect of her husband that would be both the cornerstone of the foundation of the walk, as well as the root of his future undoing: his fiercely independent spirit and determination to follow God's will as he sees it, regardless of the group he is affiliated with or of the circumstances.

As a result of his innate nonconformity (which can, at times, be an admirable trait), John Robert Stevens and his family lived one step above the extreme poverty level. Their house had cost them $4,600.00, which they were paying off in monthly installments of $23.00. This does not seem like much today, but in those days it was quite a sum, and for a house that was only 670 square feet, including the garage.[16] In his famous semi-autobiographical account, "How God Met Me in Psalm 144," John Robert gives a description of these days as if they were in some ways a golden age prior to his beginning the Walk:

> There were days of fasting and prayer and a good deal of seeking after the Lord, especially when we lived down just a little bit north of Compton . . . . That was the first home that we bought when we first came to California and we lived there for awhile.
>
> I did a lot of gardening and enjoyed it very much while we were there. One of the most blessed times, I think, our family ever had in all of our lives, and at that time we just traveled from church to church, and had what you call revival campaigns – evangelistic campaigns – they called it a lot of things. But it was generally just a renewal for the church.
>
> An old chicken shed in the back end of that yard was converted to become my prayer house. The chickens we raised on wire like we raised rabbits and everything else. We raised them on wire instead of having a chicken coop with them running loose – just too much stealing in the neighborhood to let the chickens loose.
>
> But we did enjoy this and during that, that chicken house was converted into a small sanctuary for the Lord to meet my heart. We sought the Lord and He began to speak to me concerning the time that we would leave this traveling through the churches and that the Lord would give me a church and people.[17]

Of course, another reason that John Robert wanted to leave behind his free-lance evangelist days was that it was becoming increasingly more difficult for him to do so because of the fast inroads denominationalism was having among the independent churches in Los Angeles. This was happening more quickly than it ever had before because a lot of strange new ideas were circulating within Pentecostalism, causing some to panic and others to realize the need to codify their beliefs into traditional statements of faith and doctrine. Thus, even a fiercely independent preacher like John Robert Stevens was eventually forced to apply for ordination papers with the Foursquare church in 1947.

Within his application he based his qualifications on the semesters he had completed at Life Bible College. Even though he hadn't graduated, the Foursquare hierarchy approved his papers on 19 November 1947. There is, unfortunately, some bit of a mystery surrounding this ordination. Todd Ehrenborg attempted to clear it up and came up with this answer:

> The records do not reflect whether or not he attended the ordination service or ever received the credentials. . .In 1949 the Life Bible College requested Stevens' ordination certificate to be revoked and it is now held by the Life Bible College.[18]

Most churches are hesitant to disclose the precise reasons why someone's ordination has been revoked so we must speculate cautiously about what happened between Stevens and the Foursquare church. Perhaps the denomination was caving in under pressure from both inside and outside that a person's education had to be finished before he could be fully acceptable. Or perhaps (and this would be the fault of the Foursquare church as much as it was of Stevens) Stevens had misled them about his amount of time at Life Bible College. It appears, however, that for whatever reasons, John Robert Stevens was not hurt or set back in any way as a

immediate result of this rejection, for in the same year, he had also applied for ordination within the assemblies of God (whether this took place before or after the revocation of his Foursquare ordination is a matter for conjecture).[19] Although he was never was officially ordained by the Assemblies of God, his Foursquare ordination (if it was still valid at this time) was recognized as being sufficient for him to minister as long as he passed a written examination. Stevens was obviously playing the field, just like in the good old days prior to paranoia and consolidation. After all, he knew that he had been called by God to preach – what difference did it make to him if men decided to erect barriers in front of his ministry? He knew God would provide a way through them.

That way was finally opened to him as the result of a doctrinal dispute that arose when he was pastoring the Metropolitan Tabernacle in nearby Lynwood for the assemblies of God. The immediate consequences of this dispute ended in the Assemblies of God showing John Robert to the door in April 1950.[20] Within such a potpourri of doctrines and beliefs, what could possibly be so radical as to cause such a reaction? As the Rev. Joseph Flowers of the Assemblies of God headquarters in Springfield, Missouri, put it: "He embraced a radical departure" from the standard Pentecostal teachings.[21] His name was removed from their scrolls.

It is hard to believe that something so sharp could have arisen between Stevens and the AOG hierarchy so shortly after Stevens had successfully completed a written examination that mainly concentrated on doctrine. However, the solution to this problem, once it is fully grasped, reveals not only the split between Stevens and the AOG, but exposes the inherent contradictions within the whole Pentecostal system: If the gift ministries are still as fully operational today as they were in the days of the original apostles, then it is reasonable that those who claim the same office today should be able to speak with the same authority. In other words, when men are given the same authority as the Scripture, differences over doctrines and interpretations are bound to arise. In this case, a movement out of Canada, spawned by William Marrion Branham, known as the Latter Rain Movement, not only caused great controversy with the whole spectrum of evangelical Christianity, it literally tore the assemblies of God apart. It should, then, come as no surprise to learn that John Robert Stevens had come under the influence of this new movement and had begun to teach its doctrines to the AOG church in Lynwood.

Notes:

1. William J Stevens in telephone interviews with Woodrow Nichols on 25 July 1979 and 14 January 1980. Most of the information about the early life of John Robert Stevens from birth to 1946 is from these interviews.

2. The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel was incorporated on 28 December 1927 by Aimee Semple McPherson, who was its lifetime president.

3. Stevens, John Robert "The Test of True and False Prophets and Teachers," Living Word Tapes (August 1967).

4. Stevens, John Robert "Gift of Miracles," Living Word Tapes (20 SEP 1975).

5. John Robert Stevens supports his father's testimony regarding this incident. On a tape of a Grace Chapel Friday Night Bible Study (10 MAR 1961), he said that he was 14 or 15 when he began preaching.

6. John Robert Stevens, from a private tape of an elders meeting at private home in La Mirada, California (21 MAY 1966).

7. Stevens, John Robert. "The New Step Into the Day of Revelation," Living Word Tapes (14 DEC 1972).

8. Remitz, Ed. "The Walk: Cult Empire or Poor Church," a copyrighted article in the Sacramento Union (11 MAR 1979), p. A2.

9. Ehrenborg, Todd B. "Research Project on the Church of the Living Word," Christian Research Institute (22 APR 1978), p. 1.

10. Stevens, "Gift of Miracles, " op. cit.

11. Quebedeaux, Richard. *The New Charismatics* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976), p. 31.

12. Michael L. Sondergard in a letter to Woodrow Nichols, 26 SEP 1979. Sondergard interviewed William J. Stevens on 5 JUL 1979.

13. Remitz, op. cit.

14. Stevens, John Robert "All Around Grace Chapel of South Gate," Living Word Tapes (16 MAR 1977).

15. Martha Stevens, divorce papers (2 NOV 78), p. 1.

16. “All Around Grace Chapel of South Gate," op. cit.

17. Stevens, John Robert "How God Met Me in Psalm 144," Living Word Tapes (17 AUG 1975).

18. Ehrenborg, op. cit.

19. Another plausible theory is that the Foursquare Church revoked his ordination on discovering that he had already applied for one with the AOG.

20. Ehrenborg, op. cit.

21. Remitz, op. cit.

Chapter Two:

The Latter Rain Crisis

The Cold War Awakening

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Pentecostal movement became more polarized as the result of differences in doctrines, over the interpretations of the gifts of the Spirit, over the nature of the Trinity, and even over the name a new disciple was to be baptized into, not to mention church structure. As one can well imagine, this process of polarization did not take place without great bitterness and conflict, sometimes even dividing households between themselves. As the polarization increased, new power centers formed and began to flex their muscles and influence over the smaller, more independent centers. As Vinson Synan puts it in his classic study of the subject, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*:

> At any rate, it was clear that as the period of formal organization ended around 1930, the stage of massive growth and development began, and along with it, a growth of church institutions and ecclesiastical machinery that had been almost non-existent in the early years of the movement.[1]

By 1932, most of the Pentecostal denominations had been formed. No longer was it sufficient to have a "calling" to qualify for ministry. Thus, those who felt that they had a calling, but did not want to submit to the authority of denominational bureaucracy, went out on their own and became wandering evangelists, either starting their own movements or operated interdenominationally.

Toward the end of World War II, two important things took place that revolutionized the American Church. First, the beginning of the Cold War with the Soviet Union created fear and tension in the hearts of the American people. And second, many of the wandering evangelists had hit upon a winning formula that allowed them to compete with the power of the growing Pentecostal denominations: the formula known as the gift of "healing." As a result of these two factors, America experienced an awakening almost unprecedented in its history. In fact, the conservatism of the Fifties can be in part attributed to this phenomenon.

Many of the more famous evangelists today began their successful ministries at this time (e.g., Bill Bright, Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, etc.). Some less famous, but no less influential men, began successful "healing" ministries at the same time. Even though the Pentecostal denominations distrusted a lot of these men, their hands were largely tied because in their own doctrines they had accepted the gift of healing as a supernatural element of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Up until then, it had never been seriously emphasized before, but now they had to either go along with it (since it proved to be immensely popular with Pentecostals) or risk loosing a major share of their following. As a result of all this, the tension between the denominations and the more independent ministers increased. This alone would have caused potential difficulties between John Robert Stevens and the AOG, but it was the new revelation coming out of Canada, spawned by William M. Branham, known as the Latter Rain Movement, that broke the camel's back.

William Branham

Branham's ministry soon became the focal point of many of the more radical doctrines that had always plagued Pentecostalism, like the anti-Trinitarian "Jesus only" doctrine and some gnostic ideas (e.g., Cain was the offspring of Eve and Satan, the "serpent's seed"). In fact, most of the occultic/demonic ideas still circulating in some Neo-Pentecostal circles today can be traced in one way or another to the influence of William Branham's ministry or to those who were closely associated with him.

Branham's influence on John Robert Stevens was legion. Branham's mysticism opened up the door for many to start over-spiritualizing the literal meaning of Scripture so that a secret doctrine, open to the enlightened elite, began to emerge, closely paralleling the secret doctrines of Spiritualism and Christian Science. For example, on 7 May 1946, Branham claimed to have received a visitation from an angel who told him that "he would be able to detect diseases by vibrations in his right hand."[2] The obvious occult implications of this physical phenomena (mediumism) were largely overlooked since all of Branham's terminology and interpretations came straight from proof texts, usually under the whitewash of the gifts of the Spirit.[3]

Besides the vibrations in his right hand, Branham was also able to move in what he called the "word of knowledge," which is actually no different from psychic mind-reading, that is, the person with this gift can tell you intimate facts about things you have done that he could have never known in his own experience (e.g., your name, whether or not you are married, your occupation, something you have done in secret, etc.). In fact, Branham became famous for his ability to identify the names and problems of complete strangers. To add fuel to the fire, he even claimed that his powers did not even come from the Holy Spirit, but from the angel who stood by his right side while he ministered. As for his identity, he usually liked to keep it a secret, letting most of his followers arrive at their own conclusions, but at times he did let those close to him know that he saw himself as the "End Time Messenger who was the Angel to the Seventh Church Age in these final closing days of time."[4]

Branham's messages were all taped and transcribed as the living spoken word (rhema) from God, usually equal with Scripture (especially if it interpreted the Scripture) in the eyes of his followers. Even his sudden death in an automobile accident in 1965 did not discourage his followers, many of them believing that he would rise from the dead soon after he was buried. But even though he is still buried, his tapes and written messages still live and plague Biblical Christianity in America today.[5]

The Latter Rain

During the history of the Pentecostal Movement, many groups associated themselves with the "latter rain" of Joel 2:23, usually seeing themselves as the last movement of God before the Second Coming.[6] However, the name is primarily associated with a movement that arose out of Canada in 1948, specifically at the Sharon Orphanage and Schools in North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

George R. Hawtin was perhaps its main leader. Shortly after joining the staff at Sharon Orphanage, he and a few like-minded people attended a William Branham healing campaign at the Exhibition Gardens in Vancouver, B.C.[7] Branham opened them up to a whole new realm of spiritual understanding and they returned to North Battleford with the new ideas that would come to be associated with the movement: healing by the laying on of hands instead of by pastoral prayer (the accepted method in most Pentecostal circles at the time), singing in the Spirit, personal directive prophecy, progressive revelation, and latter day apostles and prophets.

Even though this was a new movement, there were many similarities between it and some of the more radical movements that had gone before it. In fact, the emphasis on the total guidance of the Spirit helped to overcome the general malaise that most Pentecostals had fallen under as a result of the rise of denominations. As Richard Michael Riss has noted in his master's thesis on the subject:

> The similarities between some forms of early pentecostalism and the 1948 revival are quite striking. Not only did they both come to be known as "The Latter Rain Movement," and not only was there a heavy emphasis on the shortness of time before the coming of Christ, but there was emphasis upon the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy and tongues, and there was stress upon the unity of all believers in Christ. Baptism with the Holy Ghost was said to be prerequisite to experiencing the gifts of the Spirit, and, in both cases, this was conveyed with the laying on of hands.[8]

One could well argue that the Latter Rain Movement of 1948 was successful largely as the result of the formal methodology and orthodoxy brought about by the denominational solidification process. Thus, the movement was a reaction, and in most reactionary movements, the extremes are rules rather than the exceptions. As a result, the movement was at times characterized by Spiritualistic trends that marred the earlier so-called "latter rain" movements as well. This is made clear by a quote from D.M. Panton in Riss's paper:

> <u>Nothing less than miracle and inspiration can fulfil the second rain.</u> But this compels a warning solemn beyond expression. As demonism was rampant ere the first rain fell, and has continued to descend between the two Advents in frequent showers, so now for seventy years [1848-1919] there had been a drenching succession of miraculous outbursts, from the birth of Spiritualism in Hydesville in 1848 to the descent of "tongues" in Los Angeles in 1907; and more are inevitable.[9]

This warning went unheeded in 1919, so it comes as no surprise that it went unheeded in 1948. As God's Spirit began to move in the genuine Cold War Awakening, so did Satan. What was sadly lacking at the time, with the extreme emphasis on healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, singing in tongues, and the gift of knowledge, was, of course, the genuine "discernment of spirits." Many were deceived, among them John Robert Stevens. Maybe when the gift of discernment of spirits becomes prominent among God's people we may begin to believe that the latter rain has fallen. Until then, it is best to put our trust in God and His Word rather than men or new revelations.

Infatuation

As mentioned earlier, John Robert Stevens never let an opportunity go by to see a new preacher or hear a new teaching. This was both a strength and a weakness. The weak side won out, but not after a deep struggle. John Robert was at first leery about the Latter Rain Movement, having seen many movements come and go. Sometimes, if there was an element of God's Spirit really in it, a neglected truth of God's Word would be restored, but even then it came at a great cost of division, controversy, and extreme condemnation. As a result, even though some good may have come out of them, many saints were usually sent crashing against the rocks of disillusionment, never to rise again to the full stature and challenge of active discipleship.

John Robert went to his first Latter Rain service in a small church in downtown Los Angeles sometime in 1949 or early 1950. He was quite impressed with the new teachings and was sure that he had felt the Spirit of God in the meeting (a necessary criterion in Pentecostal circles). However, late that night, after he had gone home and prayed, God came to him and told him not to be part of the Latter Rain Movement. As John Robert himself relates it:

> I had sensed something of God in those meetings, so I can describe to you how I felt in my heart – that I went before the Lord and I wept and sobbed, and I thought, "I'm an old wineskin and I'm not going to go on in anything further" – as much as I'd wanted to all my life. And I began to weep and I said, "I'll never make it because God's doing something new in the earth and He tells me I can't be a part of it."[10]

If this all occurred before he finally fell prey to the seduction of the Latter Rain, as all evidence seems to support, then we can come to two important conclusions that help us understand the complex personality of John Robert Stevens. First, from his statement above, it is obvious that Stevens felt that the Latter Rain had something that he did not – that he saw it as God "doing something new in the earth," and that for some reason that he could not fathom, God told him to stay away from it. Later, Stevens would say that this was because the Latter Rain hadn't gone far enough and was still carrying on in the Church Age, whereas God had saved him to be the apostle for a whole new dispensation.[11] And second, as we will now see, John Robert, at times, found it expedient (for whatever legitimate reasons he could find) to go against the revealed will of God for him. In other words, Stevens would disobey what he had perceived to be God's will for him and would get involved with the Latter Rain Movement. This would not only initiate his downfall with the AOG, but set him up for the great deception to come.

However, before we go on and document his precise disobedience, it is best for us to do a little backpedaling. First of all it must be remembered that John Robert's entire upbringing had been one of saturation in Pentecostal tales of supernatural exploits. If others were able to administer spiritual gifts, then why not he – he who had been called to be the apostle of the Kingdom? It must also be remembered that he had been going through a very deep spiritual crisis period in his life, being disillusioned with the malaise that slowly enshrouded the Pentecostal world. The Latter Rain and the healing movement must have seemed like a new rain after a drought to him.

In fact, in 1949, the Lord had been directing him to Psalm 144, preparing him for a great revelation that would be important for all of God's people on earth. This event is recorded in perhaps John Robert's most personal taped message, "How God Met Me in Psalm 144":

> And the 144th Psalm – I didn't profess to understand it. But the voice of the Lord has come very distinctly upon occasions to me and the Lord pointed me to this Psalm and said, "This will be the history of the people that I bring to you, of the church that is going to come up."[12]

Shortly after he received his revelation about the 144th Psalm, he shared it with a Pentecostal church in Maywood, California. Unfortunately, the congregation there, instead of receiving his revelation, completely misunderstood him, thinking that he was trying to recruit new members for a new church he was thinking about starting, based, of course, on this new revelation.[13] Whether this was true or not, it was shortly after this that John Robert began pastoring the AOG church in Lynwood. It is doubtful that he had been trying to start a new church at this time, but if he had any temptations to do so, events would soon give him no alternative.

Holy Jim Canyon

In the summer of 1950, John Robert took his family to Yosemite National Park for a needed vacation. However, even the vast natural beauty of Yosemite couldn't take his mind off of his discouragement with the whole state of Pentecostalism, especially with the church in Lynwood – his flock. In the still natural cathedral of Yosemite Valley he cried unto the Lord:

> I said, "Lord, this Pentecostal thing, this screaming and beating the altar, trying to get through to something from God." I said, "Lord, there must be a release from this thing that I had seen in that church." The church – I tried to lead it into something and they would just disintegrate into an emotionalism. I was just lost to know what to do.[14]

John Robert knew that there must be more spiritual reality than in just hyped-up emotionalism, the standard fare of Pentecostal methodology. His disappointment was even worse when he realized that most of his flock was content with what they had. Nothing he could do nor say helped his people to see that they were spiritually poor, naked, and destitute like the church in Laodicea.

Stevens returned from Yosemite refreshed but not satisfied. He was, however, able to get his congregation to agree to seek the face of the Lord. During this time, a friend (another pastor), advised him to seek solitude in the Saddleback Mountain range, east of Santa Ana. He took this advise, and began going up into the hills of the Cleveland National Forest, spending most of his time in Silverado Canyon especially Holy Jim Canyon:

> And I took to going up there three or four times a week. Took me an hour and a half to drive up there and I'd pray and seek the Lord. I could take you right now to the great big old flat rock that I sat on month after month. And somewhere along in the

> Fall, I was so full of burden, I started seeking God so earnestly and I called a period of fasting and prayer – prayer every night in the church with fasting. And somewhere, about the second week – all fasting. The Lord met me.
>
> I'd been up in the Canyon I think that day, if I remember right, or I think so, and come down and the Lord spoke to me. He said, "In a few days, I'll meet you and your hands will never be empty when you minister to my people." And it came to pass.
>
> That was along about November, sometime like that, and the Lord met me on the first of March in 1951.[15]

In the January before that fateful March, the Lord had been speaking to John Robert about how His Word was being imprisoned by men and needed to be set free. Stevens himself could feel the Word locked up within his own heart, for he was unable to neither break through himself into a higher spiritual reality, nor lead his flock into it:

> Now I knew I was getting closer to what God had really spoken. So it went on just a very few weeks and again we were coming up to just a certain level – but there was no breakthrough. It was strictly an old order thing and you could realize it.[16]

This seemed to confirm a prophecy that had been given to him by another man that it would "be many, many years before my [God's] people hear your word."[17] Then, at the height of his frustration, when everything seemed hopeless, something happened that seemed like the answer to his pent-up longings. Unfortunately, this answer would mean, if he took it, the direct disobedience of God's previous command to him not to get involved with the Latter Rain Movement.

Controversy

Tacoma, Washington, had been the sight of a successful Latter Rain campaign in March, 1949. George Hawtin, the main leader of the movement, had led this campaign himself with the cooperation of four of the local churches. An article by Hawtin, quoted in Riss, describes this campaign:

> The meetinghouse was packed every night. Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening the large auditorium of the Fellowship Hall was rented. The galleries and main auditorium were filled. It was a glorious week.[18]

However, it was not a big week in the rest of the Pentecostal world. During this time, a big controversy over the Latter Rain Movement began to come to a head in the AOG. It centered around some of the more radical doctrines espoused in the movement, such as latter day apostle and prophets (with the can of worms of progressive revelation that it implied, not to mention the potential threat to the authority of the AOG hierarchy), and the impartation of spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands – the hands of the latter day prophets and apostles. In fact, it was specifically the teachings of Winston I. Nunes, a black preacher from the West Indies and leader of a Latter Rain church in Toronto, Ontario, that the AOG had singled out as being representative

of the whole movement. Nunes was perhaps more radical in some of his ideas of the parousia of Christ (overspiritualizing it to mean that the saints this side of the First Resurrection can experience the resurrection body in this life), and though it may not have been wholly fair to use his teachings exclusively, he was well enough in the mainline of the movement so that the AOG couldn't be accused of jumping to the wrong conclusions about the movement as a whole.

In fact, the controversy had previously gotten so out of hand, the AOG had passed a resolution in the Fall of 1949 that disapproved of the practices of "The New Order of the Latter Rain." The items of disapproval were listed under resolution number 7 as thus:

1. The overemphasis relative to imparting, identifying, bestowing or confirming of gifts by the laying on of hands and prophecy.
2. The erroneous teaching that the Church is built on the foundation of present-day apostles and prophets.
3. The extreme teaching as advocated by the "New Order" regarding the confession of sin to man and deliverance as practiced, which claims prerogatives to human agency which belong only to Christ.
4. The erroneous teaching concerning the impartation of the gifts of languages as special equipment for missionary service.
5. The extreme and unscriptural practice of imparting or imposing personal leadings by the means of gifts of utterance.
6. Such other wrestings and distortions of Scripture interpretations, which are in opposition to teachings and practices generally accepted among us.[19]

The controversy over the Latter Rain almost tore the AOG apart. Shortly after the passage of the above resolution, the AOG lost one of their oldest and greatest members – Stanley Frodsham. Frodsham had been with the AOG since its formation in 1916 but was sympathetic to the Latter Rain's belief that denominationalism was unscriptural.[20] As editor of the AOG's magazine, Frodsham had exercised a large influence in the dissemination of Pentecostal doctrine and theology, especially in the critical years, leading to eventual acceptance by most evangelicals. It came as a great and terrible shock to the AOG hierarchy when Frodsham resigned after the resolution against the Latter Rain was passed. His resignation almost split the denomination irrevocably.

It comes as no surprise then, that after losing such a prestigious member as Stanley Frodsham, and after undergoing such a traumatic experience caused by his resignation, the AOG was not about to tolerate difficulties with minor pastors like John Robert Stevens. Especially when the difficulties not only concerned the Latter Rain itself, but Winston I. Nunes in particular.

Tacoma

A few short weeks following Stevens's revelation in Holy Jim Canyon[21], a man came into the church at Lynwood and sensed that John Robert was ready for something new. Even though it probably didn't take much of a prophet to discern the extreme dissatisfaction Stevens was experiencing, the man seemed by Stevens to have been sent by God. At the end of the service the man approached Stevens and told him that he knew a "real man of God". (i.e., Winston I. Nunes)

who was currently ministering in Tacoma, Washington. Seeing that Stevens was interested, he invited himself to Stevens's home after the service for lunch and then called long distance to Tacoma, in a person to person call (much to Stevens's frustration since he was living on a shoestring budget). He got Winston Nunes on the line and gave the phone to Stevens. The following conversation changed the life of John Robert Stevens more than any other single event in his life, and, considering the influence he has had on the teaching and doctrine of the Charismatic Movement, changed the course of Neo-Pentecostalism itself. As Stevens himself relates it.

> But he got on the phone and called up this man in Tacoma, Washington, and he said, "I have a brother here that I want you to talk with" – and so, he handed me the phone. And I said, well, I didn't know him, I never heard of him and he'd never heard of me. But he [Nunes] said, "Can I bless you?" And I said, "Fine."
>
> He said, "Lord, you've promised this brother that in a few days you'd meet him and his hands would never again be empty when he ministers to your people." That did it! Just like that! It just – bang! – that's revelation! That's something the Lord told me. So I knew it was of the Lord.[22]

It takes an extremely strong, perceptive, and discerning Christian to still be critical after such an awe-inspiring demonstration of supernatural knowledge. Considering the fact that John Robert had been previously warned against the Latter Rain, it still comes as a bit of a surprise that he walked into the acceptance of this demonstration without so much as a second confirmation. After all, if God was going to directly contradict Himself, He should be willing to furnish as much proof as necessary to convince His servant that He had indeed, changed it. However, the next Sunday, John Robert Stevens was on the bus for Tacoma.

At first, upon his arrival, Stevens was very disappointed in the meetings being held in the small Tacoma church pastored by John Mozart, which, according to Stevens, had been a Swedish church at one time, part of the Independent Assemblies of God. Stevens stayed, while in Tacoma, in the same room as Winston Nunes, so it is highly probable that they got to know each other fairly well. If, as Stevens, states, he hadn't heard of Nunes previous to meeting him, he was also unaware of the fact that Nunes was anathema to the AOG, of which Stevens still represented. It is hard to believe that he was still unawares of this on his return.

But, as mentioned, Stevens did not feel that there was much going on in Tacoma that would resolve the spiritual impasse he and his congregation were currently going through and wondered why he had been so quick to come. In fact, he felt there was more of a spiritual "blessing" present during his own services back in Lynwood than in Mozart's church. Feeling that he had already stayed too long in Tacoma, Stevens went to a travel agency to get a plane ticket home. On the walk down the hill to the agency he passed a small Bible store and stopped to look into the window. A woman motioned for him to come in and took him to the back where she showed him a new Oxford Bible that had just arrived. Stevens was immediately shocked: the Bible was opened to Psalm 144! "Now I don't think that anyone would even dare call that coincidence," he said afterwards.[23]

His Impartation

That night, with his ticket already purchased, at his last service in Tacoma, the leaders laid hands on John Robert Stevens and prophesied over him.[24] But more important than even the prophesy, he received his initial impartation at the hands of Winston I. Nunes. According to Pentecostal and Latter Rain belief, a person who has been anointed by God for ministry has authority to bestow this gift on others by the laying on of hands. The Latter Rain capitalized on this teaching and, under the idea that the ministries of apostle and prophet had been restored to them, imparted the gifts of this ministry to others as if they were the Holy Spirit Himself. Nunes layed his hands on Stevens and gave him his initial impartation, reminding him of the words in Psalm 144: "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight."[25] In light of the revelation that God had given to Stevens that his hands would never again be empty (the interpretation of this Psalm for Stevens), it came as no surprise to John Robert that his official ministry had now begun. He was so caught up in the Spirit he also began to prophesy along with everyone else:

> And I remember the Spirit of the Lord came upon me and I began to prophesy how that under the anointing of the Lord that Babylon would strike the shepherds and the sheep would be scattered. And great weeping came upon me. I prophesied almost the total disintegration of the church there in Lynwood – which happened within six weeks.[26]

Shortly after this meeting John Robert Stevens began moving in a signs ministry, that is, he began to have physical signs (burning sensations) in his left hand and fingers. It was revealed to him that he would now be able to heal, cast out demons, and receive knowledge through these signs in his hands. He never doubted the truth of these signs, even though they are notoriously associated with clairvoyants and mediums. After all, William Branham himself had similar gifts and powers. Even Oral Roberts had begun his ministry with a sign ministry in his right hand that gave him the "power to detect the presence, names and numbers of demons."[27] But even greater than all this, it was revealed to John Robert that when the signs moved to his right hand he would know that he was to begin moving into apostolic ministry.[28]

To John Robert this was clearly the fulfillment of Psalm 144: his hand had been anointed for warfare against the hostile spirit realm. The burning feeling in his left thumb was the sign of spiritual authority (to Stevens, the thumb represents authority). God had finally met him. Unfortunately, the problem that God had distinctly forbidden him to get mixed up with the Latter Rain Movement must have stilled bothered him, for even in later years Stevens denied that he had received his initial impartation from the Latter Rain. In a letter dated 10 JUN 76, John Robert Stevens said to Richard Riss:

> At no time did I line up with the Latter Rain movement because at the time this was a direct revelation to my heart, so there was no impartation from the Hawtin brothers. The original impartation came from the Independent Assemblies of God church in Tacoma.[29]

This is, of course, just simply not true on all accounts. Yes, John Robert received his impartation at the Independent Assemblies of God church in Tacoma and not at the hands of the Hawtin brothers (the leaders of the Latter Rain Movement). However, Winston Nunes, who represented both the Independent Assemblies of God and the Elim Missionary Assemblies (he represented both of them at the World Pentecostal Conference in 1952), was most definitely associated with the Latter Rain Movement, enough so to be identified as its main theologian by the AOG.[30] Because of John Robert's reluctance to admit that he had gotten involved with the Latter Rain, even using the ban God had placed on the movement to him as proof, is evidence enough that there is still doubt in his mind as to whether or not he truly disobeyed God. For if he did, then where did the signs in his hand come from? Where did all the revelations and spiritual power come from? We hope to answer these questions in the last chapter, just in case John Robert never bothered to raise them.

Rejection

John Robert returned to Lynwood like a victorious conqueror. However, within the short span of six weeks, his victory had been annulled. As mentioned earlier, the AOG was not about to entertain anything even lightly smacking of the Latter Rain. When John Robert Stevens began introducing singing in tongues and personal directive prophecy within the services at Lynwood, and worse of all, implying that he was being called into apostolic ministry, the AOG took swift measures to stop it before it spread its infection any farther in Los Angeles.

His Sunday teachers were the first to protest. They went on strike and refused to teach under his ministry. As Stevens relates it, they said:

> We believe that this is false doctrine. This thing is false. He [Stevens] could well become a false prophet. We are not going to teach Sunday school this morning.[31]

Stevens allowed them to leave. After all, they were part of the Old Order (i.e., the denominationalism of the Church Age) and could not be expected to move solely in the realm of revelation. Or, as he succinctly put it: "And they fled, because they were hirelings -- that's why they fled: they were hirelings!"[32] After all, hadn't he prophesied in Tacoma that Babylon (the Old Order) would strike the shepherds, leading to the disintegration of the Lynwood church? It only followed that those who resisted him, the true shepherd, were obviously hirelings, not loving the sheep.

Even though he may have been right in his analysis of them, John Robert should have listened to them. They were right! As the later history of the Walk undeniably shows, they were right. Their discernment of what was to come was almost uncanny in its accuracy.

Shortly after the incident with the Sunday school teachers, John Robert was brought before the AOG District Council, who had employed an attorney to help them in their dispute (the history of Pentecostalism – and most denominations to be fair – is rife with splits and legal disputes over property in their wakes). With the aid of two former elders of Lynwood ("rebellious former elders" as Stevens put it), the case was brought up against John Robert for teaching false doctrine. While his trial may have been a kangaroo court, it must be remembered that they had at

least given him his day in court, that is, they gave him a chance to defend his teachings and actions before the legal representatives of the AOG. This would be a favor that Stevens would never grant to anyone who turned against him in the future.

On a Monday night, exactly six weeks to the day after receiving his initial impartation, the AOG cast their vote against him. Stevens was drummed out of the AOG by the narrow margin of four votes, showing, of course, that the Latter Rain Movement was still intriguing to more AOG members than just John Robert. In fact, there was never any agreement among those present as to the precise charges for John Roberts dismissal – just over the fact that he was dismissed. As John Robert relates it:

> They had held the meeting up for an hour trying to find a charge that they could dismiss me on, and I said, "If you call false doctrine, then we'll go into the Word, won't we? And you prove I'm doing anything at all like false doctrine, or if I've ministered anything wrong – you'll point it out – you'll give evidence that I have so done."
>
> They said, "Well, no; we're not going to go into that. We don't believe that you've done anything wrong or that you've ministered false doctrine. But we told you to resign the church." This was what it amounted to: "We told you to resign the church and not to preach this word anymore, this thing that you're – whatever this thing is that's happened to you."
>
> And I said, "God did this. I can't go back on what God's done." They said, "Okay, we'll dismiss you then for insubordination. You didn't do what we told you to do." Before God, that's exactly what they did.
>
> I said, "I'll buy that! I had a word from the Lord and I spoke it. And if you think that's insubordination to the denomination, I'll stand still for that." So they went out and dismissed me for insubordination.[33]

John Robert Stevens was dismissed, leaving with the feeling that his prophecy had now been fulfilled: Babylon had struck one of the shepherds. Like his father before him, John Robert now realized that if he wanted to be faithful to what he perceived as his calling, he would have to start his own church. After all, the denominations were frozen, set in their quick-death ways, not open to new revelation.

No official charge for his dismissal was issued by the AOG for over six months after his dismissal. In the meanwhile, he had started his own church at Grace Chapel of South Gate, a community right next to Lynwood. It came as both a surprise and not as a surprise to learn that the official charge against him from the AOG was that he had split the church in Lynwood so that he could start his own church in the vicinity. After the fact reasoning, to say the least for John Robert Stevens:

> But they waited until we bought the church at Grace Chapel, six months afterwards . . . . But you see, you don't kick a man out for what he's going to do six months from now, if you follow what I mean.[34]

Of course, in light of the circumstances, and in light of denominational history, it is not surprising that the AOG came up with such a politically expedient reason for dismissing John Robert Stevens. After all, his early ministry at Grace Chapel immediately confirmed any doubts they might have had.

Notes:

1. Synan, Vinson *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971), p. 223.

2. Harrell, David Edwin Jr. *All Things Are Possible* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 28.

3. Another famous mediumistic healer, Edgar Cayce, also used Scripture to validate the obvious occult phenomena and philosophy that he expounded, but since his ministry was conducted largely at home and in a trance state, outside of the frenzy of the revival meeting, Cayce never had the influence on Pentecostals that Branham exercised.

4. Harrell, op. cit.

5. Branham is still held in high esteem by many members of the Full Gospel Business Men's Association, an organization that not only befriended and supported him, but the only organization that Branham felt comfortable in being identified with.

6. The "latter rain" was contrasted to the "early rain" that fell on Pentecost when the Church was born. Thus, all of the gifts and ministries of the "early rain" would be restored during the "latter rain," giving Biblical justification to their new revelations and interpretations of Scripture.

7. Riss, Richard Michael. *The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Awakening* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Thesis, April 1979), pp. 80-81. Most of the information on the Latter Rain Movement is taken from this thesis.

8. Ibid., p. 109.

9. Ibid., pp. 108-109.

10. Stevens, John Robert. "Our Spiritual Faculties," Living Word Tapes, no date.

11. According to most old-style Pentecostal teachers, the history of the Church is distinguished by seven epochs – the seven Church Ages – symbolized by the seven churches in the book of Revelation – each age characterizing a different aspect of the Church. The Latter Rain perceived themselves as coming at the end of the Laodicean Age, the final Church Age, and even though they distinguished between themselves and the Old Order (mainly interpreted as being denominationalism), they did not see themselves as distinct from the Church Age itself, like Stevens did when he began the Walk as the next stage beyond the Church, that is, the Kingdom.

12. Stevens, John Robert. "How God Met Me in Psalm 144," Living Word Tapes (17 AUG 75).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Stevens, John Robert. "A Step into the Day of Revelation," Living Word Tapes (15 DEC 72).

16. Stevens, "How God Met..," op. cit.

17. John Robert Stevens, "The Basics of Intercession: #8," Living Word Tapes (12 DEC 76).

18. Riss, op cit., p. 139.

19. Ibid., p. 165.

20. Ibid., pp. 166-168.

21. That is, the hands of John Robert Stevens would never again be empty when he ministered.

22. Stevens, "How God Met..," op. cit.

23. Ibid.

24. Stevens, John Robert. "Workshop of Intercession," Living Word Tapes (22 JAN 77).

25. Psalm 144:1.

26. Stevens, "How God Met..," op. cit.

27. Harrell, op. cit., p. 50.

28. Stevens, John Robert. "Signs," from a private tape recorded at the Church of the Living Word in Sepulveda, California, in 1967.

29. Richard Riss, in personal letter to Brooks Alexander, dated 21 MAR 77, p. 1.

30. Ibid., p. 10.

31. John Robert Stevens, "The Test of True and False Prophets and Teachers," Living Word Tapes (AUG 67).

32. Ibid.

33. Stevens, "How God Met...," op. cit.

34. Ibid.

Chapter Three:

The Early Walk – Part One

The Challenge

There are three things that made the formation of the Walk possible. First, even though John Robert had been prevented from preaching in AOG churches, nothing prevented AOG members from coming and hearing him. Pentecostals are, and have always been, extremely individualistic, interpreting the Scriptures as they see fit, no matter what their leaders say. Even the leadership in the AOG was split over the decision to dismiss John Robert. After all, the Latter Rain Movement was started by sincere Pentecostals and was composed of Pentecostals, and was, therefore, seen by most Pentecostals as a legitimate extension of Pentecostalism – a fresh wind, so to speak, in the midst of the general malaise brought about by organization.

The more moderate evangelical movement had never largely accepted Pentecostalism. Only the larger Pentecostal denominations were trying to gain respectability by weeding out the more extreme, radical elements that always comprised the solid backbone of the Pentecostal Movement. In a way, the Latter Rain Movement marked the return of hardcore Pentecostalism, free from the direction of a central committee.

The second thing was that John Robert Stevens had spent a good part of his life in the Los Angeles area, preaching in literally scores of churches, and had, thus, gathered a loyal following. On top of that, there were hundreds of others still within the confines of denominationalism that were dissatisfied and looking for a way out into something new and exciting. He knew that most Pentecostals were sympathetic to the new revelations coming out of the Latter Rain Movement (many of which were revivals of old radical revelations that had floated in the backwaters of Pentecostalism from the beginning). He could be reasonably assured that if he could find a place to hang his shingle, many would flock to hear him speak.

And finally, John Robert Stevens never doubted (at least publicly) that he had been called to preach and to bring forth the new revelation of the Kingdom. He was totally devoted to his mission and would preach the truth as he saw it regardless of whether his message was accepted or rejected. After all, God had told him that it would be many years before his message would be accepted by the Church. He was now facing the first test of faith of his real ministry. Would he measure up to the challenge?

He not only rose to the challenge, he set his face like a flint and not only laid the foundation for the Walk, but for the revelation of the entire Kingdom Age. He began to do this by first finding a place where he could bring forth the new revelation (the living word: the *rhema*) without censorship from the outside. Out of this quest, he found Grace Chapel of South Gate.

Grace Chapel

The finding of Grace Chapel is another legendary story in the Walk. This memorable event took place a few months following his dismissal from the AOG, when John Robert and Martha were on their way to Holy Jim Canyon. It is best told in John Robert's own words:

In the months that followed after all this had taken place, I remember driving down the street one day and we had a jug of kerosene, still going back up – we'd found a little cabin up in the Canyon where the Lord was first meeting my heart – and we'd go back up there. Suddenly, the Lord's direction was upon me, it was just so sudden. I turned the corner and it upset the kerosene jug and it fell on Sister Stevens' feet, very sensitive feet, and she was very upset. She said, "What are you doing? Watch where you're going!" The jug had just fallen right on her feet, and I said, "The Lord's leading us." And we drove by this old church and it was all boarded up . . . . It had been a Baptist church and they sold to someone else to build another church and then they couldn't do with the building what they wanted to do, so they sold the building to us. We paid $13,750.00 for Grace Chapel. That would be about, that was 1951.[1]

In another message, Stevens claimed that after God had directed him to Grace Chapel by special revelation (through burning sensations felt in various parts of his body), he was told by God, "Here's Grace Chapel."[2] In other words, even the name was given to him through special revelation. They were able to come up with the money by selling some property that they owned. They then moved into a room above the church and lived there until 1956, when they moved to Burbank.[3]

In other words, moving in total faith, John Robert and Martha sold everything they owned and invested it in Grace Chapel. This dedication must not be forgotten, especially when in his later life, John Robert became embroiled in many money scandals.

The Stevens' family lived above Grace Chapel in a small apartment that was part of the building. They had little money to live on and fasted just as often as they ate because there was no food. However, the help of several dedicated followers, they went to work on the "mess" of Grace Chapel. By 1952, it was in fairly good shape.

And as fate would have it, a little over a year after his initial impartation, the signs shifted from his left hand into his right. Thus; according to the prophecy, this meant that he was now to move in apostolic ministry. It was only fit that this occurred simultaneously with the grand opening of Grace Chapel.

A little over two years after his initial impartation, on 20 MAR 53, Grace Chapel of South Gate was incorporated as a non-profit religious corporation under the laws of the State of California. The ninth article in the papers of incorporation is worth noting for two reasons: First, because it shows that John Robert had not yet made a complete break with his sectarian past. And second, even though he hadn't yet made his break, this article shows that he believed that the Walk was the essence, or fulfillment, of what his sectarian past had been all about. Here it is verbatim:

> NINTH: The Grace Chapel of South Gate is not authorized to issue stock and is not organized for pecuniary profit, but will be operated exclusively as a Corporation for the furtherance of propagating the *Pentecostal Church Faith*, the distribution of Christian literature, the preaching of the Holy Gospel, and as a non-profit Corporation.[4] [italics added]

What exactly was this "Pentecostal Church Faith" that John Robert had dedicated his life and Grace Chapel at furthering? It was not the traditional Pentecostalism of the established denominations, that was for sure. It was, in the beginning (many of the Walk's teachings took up to 15 years to develop), essentially the same as that propagated by the Latter Rain Movement. Even though John Robert was never officially part of the Latter Rain Movement (in fact, he denied having anything to do with it at all), he moved totally within the same spirit of that movement, adopting at least 90% of their radical ideas and adding a few of his-own. However, the few that he did add of his own, would make the Walk unique in the annals of not only Pentecostalism, but among the history of American Christianity itself. What he did add, as will be shown, was a little bit of Mesmerism, Christian Science, Spiritualism, and hardcore occultism.

The Feast of Tabernacles

John Robert preached his first message in Grace Chapel in 1951 on the subject: "God is more concerned about a right spirit within you than anything else."[5] The message was given to him by direct revelation (that is, he did not prepare it) and was interpreted to be the foundational message for the New Age.

Coincidentally, perhaps the book that summed up the essence of Latter Rain ideology was published in the Summer of 1951. This was *The Feast of Tabernacles*, by George H. Warnock. This book influenced Stevens' conception of the Walk more than any single thing. His idea of the Walk being a transitional movement from the Church Age to the New Kingdom Age was derived from Warnock's thesis that there was still one feast to be fulfilled: The Feast of Tabernacles (Passover had been fulfilled by the crucifixion; Pentecost had been fulfilled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and birth of the Church). Thus, to Warnock (as spokesman for the Latter Rain Movement), the "latter rain" of Joel 2 would fulfill the Feast of Tabernacles, the fulfillment of all things:

> Therefore let us not stop at the Passover; but let us go on to enjoy the fruits for which Christ dies, even the glories of Pentecost. And let us not stop at this partial restoration of Pentecost, but let us go on to enjoy the fulness of the Pentecostal experience as recorded in the Book of Acts. And even then, let us not stop at the fulness of Pentecost, but let us go on to appropriate and experience the glories of the Feast of Tabernacles – for which Pentecost has paved the way.[6]

What he means, of course, is that Pentecostals need to join the new Latter Rain Movement and experience the new things God is doing. Warnock was no stranger to Pentecostalism. He had been Ern Baxter's personal secretary for 2-3 years prior to Baxter's affiliation with William Branham. In fact, Warnock was later referred to as Baxter's "Timothy."[7] Warnock got the idea of

the unfulfilled feast from a comment that James Watt, another early leader in the movement, made, that "the third of Israel's great feasts, the 'Feast of Tabernacles', had not been fulfilled."[8]

Warnock took the idea and elaborated upon it, blending in a potpourri of Latter Rain thought. If we wish to fully understand the Walk of John Robert Stevens we must briefly go over some of Warnock's the main ideas within Warnock's Feast of Tabernacles.

Although there was wide dissention among the Latter Rain leadership as to what exactly would constitute the fulfillment of this last great Feast, most of them believed that it would occur during the "latter rain," that is, during the days of their own movement. There was widespread agreement that the "latter rain" was, in fact, the spiritual parousia of Jesus ***in*** His saints (i.e., a spiritual Second Coming) – a first stage of His Second Coming, followed by the second stage, the physical return of Christ. This *parousia* in His saints would bring forth the "manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19), also associated with the Manchild of Revelation 12:59 and the *Elijah-Moses* ministry of Revelation 11:3-12.[9] This End Time Army of God would be "the fullness of God in the midst of His people, *to do away with the old and to establish the new*."[10] While it is not exactly made crystal clear by Warnock, it is strongly suggested that the "manifestation of sons of God" implied a literal appropriation of the resurrection body in this life, this side of the First Resurrection, if, in fact, it is not meant to be the first stage of the First Resurrection:

> For this is the day and hour of His Appearing, the hour of His spiritual visitation within His saints. It is the day and hour when Christ shall be "formed within" His people. It is the "out-resurrection from among the dead." It is Christ "the resurrection and the life" standing in our midst . . . . It is the day and hour of the manifestation of the Sons of God, when the Son Himself shall be unveiled in the hearts and lives of His many brethren.[11]

This idea of a perfect resurrection body, or at least of the misunderstandings of it, caused some of the Latter Rain leadership to "spook," feeling that elements of Spiritualism were creeping into the movement.[12] Because of this, Warnock downplayed the idea of an early resurrection in other passages, hoping this would appease the more faint-hearted. For example:

> But in this we are confident: before this cherished rapture or resurrection takes place, there is to arise a group of overcomers who shall appropriate even here and now their heritage of Resurrection Life in Jesus Christ . . . . We are not inferring that the saints will go about in glorified bodies. But we are speaking of the saints reaching out and appropriating even here and now in their heritage in the Spirit, of participating in the Melchizedek priesthood and kingdom, and of living the very spotless, immaculate life of the Son of God Himself in virtue of His abiding presence within.[13]

However, leaders such as Winston I. Nunes accepted a more literal appropriation of the resurrection life in this life, and, as we know, Nunes was a great influence on Stevens. This idea of the manifestation of the sons of God being the first stage of the Second Coming is what the Walk is all about. While the Latter Rainers struggled to figure out when exactly it would occur,

Stevens proclaimed its presence at Grace Chapel of South Gate. The Feast of Tabernacles would be fulfilled in the context of the Walk, which was the transition between the Old Order and the Kingdom Age. John Robert Stevens was the apostle of this great event.

The Manifestation of the Sons of God

The Rev. T. E. Crane of Northwest Bible Institute in Edmonton, Alberta originated the idea that the redemptive bodies of the resurrection could be appropriated here and now. Crane was the pastor of an Independent Assemblies of God (the same group Nunes represented) that was strongly affiliated with the Latter Rain headquarters at the Sharon Orphanage and Schools, North Battleford, Saskatchewan.[14]

Warnock was wise enough to downplay this idea as much as possible, but he also knew that to leave it out entirely would cause just as much trouble. Thus, such passages as the following:

> God is perfectly free to raise whom He will any time He chooses; to impart Divine Life to whomsoever he will, whenever one shall believe for it; and to translate any one that has the faith for it . . . . If we have bargained with God for a resurrection at the last Day: are we going to have an evil eye if God in mercy and love imparts His resurrection life to some *before* the last day?[15]

> It is the Appearing of Christ *within* His people, and their consequent transfiguration after His very likeness by beholding Him as He is: not by rapture, **but by the spirit!** ". . . *transfigured* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Cor. 3:18)[16]

Most members of the Latter Rain Movement believed that this "transfiguration" would only take place if you were affiliated with the Latter Rain leadership, that is, the Hawtin brothers. But since John Robert Stevens never was associated with the Hawtin brothers, he denied that he was ever part of the movement itself. However, since most of his early teaching came directly from Warnock's book, it can be said that John Robert definitely moved in the spirit of the Latter Rain. In later years, the "manifestation" became the exclusive property of the Walk, the members believing that if one were not a member of the Walk (since it took a special revelation of God for one to see what the Walk really was) then one would never appropriate this resurrection life in the here and now. In fact, the whole purpose of violent intercession was to press Stevens up into the higher realms of revelation so that by faith he might himself be able to appropriate this life so that he might usher in the Kingdom and impart the "manifestation" to those in the Walk directly, by the laying on of hands. The idea for this, once again, comes directly from the pages of Warnock:

> As surely, therefore, as God's Word is true and His oath immutable – so surely is the Lord now raising up a new generation who shall be empowered to take the promised land of spiritual power and authority, and enter into the realm of the Spirit of God. "Some must enter therein . . . . " If this new generation withdraws from the promises in the face of violent opposition, it too will perish in the wilderness, and God will wait for still another generation to take the land.[17]

However, as Stevens is the apostle of this new revelation, and thus, the most important eschatological figure in Biblical prophecy, the whole drama of appropriation in the Walk is not at the individual level, but the corporate. In other words, the members themselves will never appropriate the "manifestation" unless Stevens appropriates it first. Therefore, the members of the Walk, if they hope to appropriate in their generation, must give up all selfishness and concentrate on John Robert Stevens alone. Thus, the life of John Robert Stevens becomes the central focus of the eschatological drama. This is the essence of the Walk.

The Manchild Company

Another essential ingredient necessary for a complete comprehension of the Walk, is the idea of the Manchild Company of Revelation 12:5. Traditionally, this passage was interpreted to mean the birth and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. But since the Latter Rain identified the "manifestation" directly with the Second Coming of Christ, the "transfigured" saints themselves actually become inseparably identified with Jesus Christ Himself, there being no distinction between the two. Therefore, the passage in Revelation 12:5, to Warnock and the Latter Rainers (and, of course, to the Walk), does not refer to Jesus Christ's birth and ascension, but to the appropriation of the "manifestation" by the sons of God. The proof text for such an interpretation came from Isaiah 66:7-8, where the woman in travail (Zion) gives birth to both a son and children. Thus, when the Manchild of Revelation 12:5 is raised up to heaven, this symbolizes the appropriation of "manifestation," enabling the Manchild Company to wage an aggressive warfare in the heavenlies, that is the spiritual plane. It is this idea of the reality, taking place on the spiritual plane that caused accusations of a new Spiritualism to circulate in the Latter Rain Movement (not counting the idea of literal "transfiguration" this side of the First Resurrection):

> Now when the saints of God begin to really press into their heritage in Christ Jesus, Satan is going to object – and there will be "war in heaven." Hence the great "wrestling" that Paul speaks about . . . . Consequently the hosts of Satan are cast down; the overcomer [the Manchild Company] takes his place of authority in the place left vacant by these evil hosts of wickedness.[18]

When this is accomplished, the "manifestation of the sons of God" will be ushered in. The place of authority and judgment that the hosts of darkness once exercised from the heavenlies will now belong to the Manchild Company. The Manchild Company will judge the nations. This overidentification with the life of Jesus Christ caused even more controversy. However, Warnock and the Latter Rainers had no trouble in circumventing any serious dissention:

> To many, of course, the truth of our identification with Christ the Head is nothing less than blasphemy. But this is to be expected. When Jesus called Himself the Son of God they said, "Thou blasphemest." And yet now we hail Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Man of very Man, and God of very God. And the ages to come are going to reveal, what is now revealed by the Spirit to those whose understanding have been quickened, that *Christ is* the Body – the whole Body, and not just the Head . . . . The Son of Man in Heaven is not complete without the fulness of the Son of Man on earth, even the Body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all " (Eph. 1:23).[19]

This, of course, not only smacks of Eastern mysticism (man becoming God through a process or realization), but Gnosticism as well, where one must have a knowledge that is beyond the immediate knowledge in the Scripture, that is, a higher, more spiritual knowledge that can only be had through revelation. The elitist implications of such an idea were not only manifested in the Latter Rain Movement, they were rampant in the Walk.

The idea that Christ is a many-membered Body was central to the thinking of John Robert Stevens. Unfortunately, he was grossly guilty of overspiritualizing the context of the New Testament verses that seemed to him to imply such a truth. In fact, the whole ideology of the Walk is nothing but an overspiritualization of things already belonging to the saints or shortly to be inherited by them. But the idea that the Manchild Company is literally ***Christ on earth*** would be the seed that would lead John Robert Stevens and the Walk beyond the incipient Spiritualism of the Latter Rain Movement into the clutches of hardcore occultism and witchcraft in the years to come.

Notes:

1. John Robert Stevens, "How God Met Me in Psalm 144," Living Word Tapes (17 AUG 75).

2. John Robert Stevens, "All Around Grace Chapel of South Gate," Living Word Tapes (16 MAR 77).

3. Martha Stevens: declaration in divorce papers filed with Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County, case no. D973296 (2 NOV 78) p. 1.

4. Ibid.

5. John Robert Stevens, from a private tape recorded during a service at Grace Chapel of South Gate, 1956.

6. George H. Warnock, *The Feast of Tabernacles* (Springfield, MO: Bill Britton Edition, 1951), p. 25.

7. Richard Michael Riss, *The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Awakening* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Thesis, April 1979), p. 195. Ern Baxter later became a leader in the Discipleship/Shepherding Movement, being associated with-Christian Growth Ministries in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, in 1975.

8. Ibid., p. 104.

9. The Manchild is interpreted to mean the spiritual overcomers of the End Time, not Jesus Christ as an individual. see pp. 59-61.

10. Riss, op. cit., p.105.

11. Ibid., p. 82.

12. In fact, James Watt, the originator of the idea of the unfulfilled Feast, himself was "spooked" and withdrew from the movement, stating:

> When he observed that teaching, revelation and practice was starting to clearly depart from the standards of the Word of God, he challenged the leaders. When the leaders continued to promote an extreme position on the manifestation of the Sons of God, and continued to accept revelation and prophecy without carefully balancing it with the written word, this writer withdrew. (quoted in Riss, p. 133.).

Watt, who had attended a Baptist Seminary, "got scared and went Baptist." That is, he returned to the Baptist church. (Brother Anderson of Waukegan, IL [member of the Walk from JAN 52-OCT 76], in a telephone conversation with Woodrow Nichols, 25 OCT 79).

13. Warnock, op. cit., p. 103.

14. According to Cornelius J. Jaenan, in an article entitled, "The Pentecostal Movement":

> Spiritualistic trends were evident in the doctrine of the "manifestation of the Sons of God"...He [Rev. Crane] believed that he had seen a vision of the victorious saints as a mighty army .... His entire class was affected by his belief and soon there grew the doctrine that the "elect" would receive "redemptive bodies" here and now and that any person who died had not been able to "appropriate the redemptive body" and was therefore not one of the "overcomers." In the final analysis, to be an "overcomer" meant affiliation with the Sharon Group. Affiliation alone was believed to give hope of "manifestation." (quoted in Riss, P. 134.)

15. Warnock, op. cit., p. 103.

16. Ibid., p. 109.

17. Ibid., p. 7.

18. Ibid., p. 38.

19. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

Chapter Four:

The Early Walk – Part Two

The Conjunction of Two Worlds

If everything else was not enough, John Robert went beyond even the radical ideas of the Latter Rain Movement. This is mainly apparent in his famous 1953 sermon titled, "The Conjunction of Two Worlds." Although the text of this sermon is not available, the essence of it is mentioned in other messages that are (in fact, the "conjunction of two worlds" is a foundation message in the Walk). In a taped message titled, "Our Spiritual Faculties," Stevens elaborates on this central idea:

> Spiritual perception and vision will be opened again to many of God's people in this day. Another age is coming in which people will not walk blindly, but they will know what is taking place in what has been largely unknown before: the spirit realm round about us – the spiritual realities. We're living at a conjunction of two worlds: the world that we know and the spirit world.[1]

In other words, the End Time Army of God will receive a special quickening in their mortal bodies (more about this idea later) and through their quickened senses they will be able to directly perceive not only the presence of Christ (i.e., His *parousia*), but the dead in Christ that He brings with Him at His coming – not to mention the entire spirit world. The perception of the dead in Christ before they actually receive their new resurrection bodies was justified by Stevens by the text in Hebrews 12:1, that refers to the fact that the Church is compassed about by a great "cloud of witnesses."[2] That Stevens is guilty of overspiritualizing this passage is borne out not only by the context of the passage itself, but by the events that surrounded Grace Chapel in controversy.

John Robert Stevens and those attending Grace Chapel were widely held by most Pentecostals in Los Angeles to be dabbling in overt Spiritualism.[3] It comes as no surprise to learn that Grace Chapel went through three congregations in its first ten years. As John Robert relates this period:

> "And that was the beginning of a struggle like you wouldn't believe: spiritual warfare and battle. And there would be people that would come in – I can remember the denomination that I had been in would have people posted in the service. When God met someone they would trace them down, I don't know how, but they would get visits and phone calls and everything. We had three congregations go through that church and yet we never raised our voice to fight anyone, never did anything, except the Lord would keep saying, "I'll rid your hand of the right hand of falsehood and from strange children."[4]

Of course, as long as Stevens felt the Lord was still speaking to him, convincing him that he was right on course, he never really seriously paid any attention to any of the charges being laid against him. The persecution of the Pentecostal churches (and even some Spiritualist churches) only tended to confirm that he was moving in the true Spirit of God and the rest were

counterfeits, or "Ishmael things," as he called them (i.e., false fronts erected by Satan to not only deceive less wary believers, but also to discredit the fundamental truths being brought forth during the restoration, especially in the Walk). For example:

> "I believe that we live in the day in which we are going to see the heavens opened: we see a conjunction of the natural human realm and the spirit world – the spirit realm. And we're going to come to sight of it, experience it – to communicate with the angelic host. Amen. We're going to come to it. Now, I think that there's a reason why Spiritualism came forth, and so séances and Spiritualism came forth. I think it was done deliberately by Satan and brought forth as a great thing to discredit the fact that there was going to be communication with the heavenly host and those who have gone on before in Christ in the End Time . . . .
>
> What I'm trying to get across to you is that we're living in a day in which the spirit world is much closer to people than it was a few generations ago. And I think that Satan would like to discredit it and make people think, "Oh, this is Spiritualism," or, "This is talking with the dead," and so forth. Stay away from séances! You can wind up with an oppression that you can't shake. But I'll tell you one thing: Don't be a bit surprised if you find the presence of angels round about you."[5]

Thus, as he explains elsewhere, the Fox Sisters (the founders of Spiritualism), brought forth Spiritualism so that through this counterfeit Satan would be able to discredit such teachings as John Robert's "clouds of witnesses" revelation in the End Time. Satan also brought forth Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science so that he would be able to discredit the diving healing movement that sprung out of the Cold War Awakening. Even the Holy Rollers were manufactured by the Devil so that the Charismatic Movement could be discredited, and the Mormons so that the restoration of latter day apostles and prophets would be discredited. And of course, the Jehovah's Witnesses so that the gospel of the Kingdom (remember, Stevens was the apostle of the Kingdom) would be rejected. Or as he put it, "Everything is designed to condition us against what's really going to happen in the kingdom."[6]

But fortunately for those who have been enlightened, one can not only see the progressive restoration of God's Kingdom by studying the counterfeits, but also by studying the genuine moves of God's Spirit:

> But there's an evolution of different steps, different planes, opening up. And when you get on a higher plane it doesn't mean that it abolishes the other planes, it just means that it nullifies them as you walk in a higher realm . . . .
>
> So we don't seek to establish again the Pentecostal realm, the Fundamentalist realm, and those realms. But we seek, rather, to come up into the spiritual realm that God would set before us. This, I think, is the thing we're really striving for. Don't you?[7]

The Progressive Restoration

This idea of the progressive restoration of the Kingdom played a keyed role not only in John Robert's defense of charges laid against him, but also to prove that what he was doing was not out of the whole Pentecostal context. In other words, the Walk was only the logical extension of many things that had smoldered in the Pentecostal backwaters from the beginning. Pentecostalism had been good for its time, but it was still only "soulish." True, it was full of zeal, but if it failed to go on to the next step of revelation (i.e., the Walk), it could not help becoming spoiled, arrogant and self-righteous, being equated with the Phariseeism of the New Testament.

John Robert never denied that he himself had walked in the anointing of Pentecostalism with all of his heart, but now he had "found something better, deeper, and more wonderful."[8] To Stevens, modern Pentecostalism was on a much lower plane of not only the Walk, but especially of early Pentecostalism. Only in the Walk, Stevens proclaimed, can a believer experience the true Holy Spirit that the Pentecostals claim they have but don't:

> But the thing I rejoice in is though we do not walk perfectly yet, we are seeing the restraint and the fear of the Lord come back to us . . . . There will be some that will come up from other ranks that will be able to move into this more easily than Pentecostal people. For the very reason that Pentecostal people often excel in the realm of soul, while other people have bypassed it, and they have little by little moved into the realm of spirit. And the realm of spirit, being superior to the realm of soul, many of them will come forth into what is really of God.[9]

The Pentecostal Movement was not the only one to receive the blast of Stevens' prophetic judgment. As the Pentecostal Movement was "soulish", using emotionalism as false spirituality, so the Roman Catholic Church was "soulish", not just operating in the realm of soul, but in the carnal, fleshly level as well. The Holiness Movement was "soulish"; the Seventh Day Adventists were "soulish," using will-worship:

> "All of them have a great deal of similarity. When you go to deal with them, it's just as hard to deal with them – all of them – because they have exercised the soulish in one phase or another . . . . Not any one of those movements ever opened up to real gifts of the Holy Spirit, to the real moving of the Holy Spirit. They have not yet opened up to the real ministry of the prophets.
>
> They don't want that yet either. Do you see; can you see why? It's because the only faculty that we have in our nature capable of knowing God and understanding God is the spirit we have: our spirit. I'm not talking about the Holy Spirit we have of God; I'm talking about our element as a spirit . . . . We can never come into Sonship [i.e., the "manifestation"] until we walk with the Spirit and are led by the Spirit completely. When that happens, then our spirit is communicating with Spirit – God is a Spirit – and everything is flowing in that manner."[10]

This is, of course, the heart of what it means to be in the Walk. The name itself, "Walk," derives from the verses in Romans 8: 1-4, where the apostle Paul talks about the life of the Christian

walking after the Spirit, not after the flesh. To John Robert, all that went on before him was walking in the flesh in one stage or another. Maybe Pentecostalism went halfway, that is, walking in the soul instead of the flesh, but only the Walk was genuinely walking in the Spirit, thus, being the true Walk with God: the Walk after the Spirit.

Thus, the Walk was perceived as the final revelation in the progressive restoration of God's Spirit, the final End Time movement of God's Spirit that would usher in the Kingdom – indeed! – that would actually be the presence of the Kingdom before it actually came in full. This is essentially what John Robert Stevens meant in his papers of incorporation when he said that the purpose of Grace Chapel of South Gate would be the propagation of the Pentecostal Church Faith. Since Pentecostalism (with the implication that it had received the "latter rain" of Joel 2) claimed to have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as well as a full walk in the Holy Spirit, only the Walk truly lived up to these claims. Or, as John Robert put it:

> "In the slow evolution – are you afraid of that word? – in the slow evolution of the restoration, it had to start on a lower plane and come up. It had to do that. It had to do that. And it followed that course."[11]

Now, the concept of "planes of revelation" should be made clear at this point, lest we become guilty of misinterpreting him. Stevens got this idea (once again) from Warnock's *Feast of Tabernacles*, where John 14:2 is exposited to mean that the "many mansions" that Jesus is talking about to His disciples are actually "abodes," that is, "planes of resting" that a Christian moves up to as a result of his walk in the Spirit, as a result of his "spiritual attainment through faith and obedience."[12]

This idea, combined with the idea of the conjunction of two worlds, gave evidence to the Pentecostals in Los Angeles who were accusing Stevens of dabbling in spiritualism. Of course, knowing what Stevens was saying about Pentecostalism, it comes as no surprise to see them coming up with such a harsh condemnation. Whatever their true motives were, at least they were right in their discernment.

Gnosticism

The Walk of John Robert Stevens and much of Latter Rain ideology is nothing but a modern Gnosticism: a syncretism of Christian Science (works-believism), Spiritualism (communication with dead Christians and the angelic host), and Eastern Mysticism (spiritual attainment through different planes or levels of enlightenment). These ideas, of course, were not new to either Stevens or to the Latter Rain Movement. They had been, as mentioned earlier, smoldering in the backwaters of Pentecostalism for quite some time. What marks John Robert Stevens apart from his predecessors is that most of them were content to let these ideas smolder (or only toss them around with those who were more enlightened) while Stevens boldly capitalized on them and expounded them to the public, not only daring to go into areas where Pentecostals before him had dreaded to enter, but mapping out the territory as well. Those Pentecostals who were either disillusioned with the cold methodology and dogma of denominationalism, or who were perceptive enough to grasp some of the inherent implications of the main Pentecostal doctrines, were quick to see that John Robert Stevens was on to something – something that had the

potential to open them up to a whole new realm of spiritual experience. Unfortunately, most of them were not discerning enough to realize what kind of spirits were going to give them their spiritual experiences.

Notes:

1. John Robert Stevens, "Our Spiritual Faculties," Living Word Tapes (no date).

2. In other words, the believers on earth (or at least those who have been able to appropriate the "manifestation" by faith – i.e. works-believism) will be able to perceive and communicate with this "cloud of witnesses," and the angelic host which accompanies them, *prior* to the First Resurrection.

3. This charge, however, was nothing new in the history of Pentecostalism. In fact, the father of Pentecostalism, Charles Fox Parham (it was at his service on New Year's Eve 1900 that the modern "tongues movement" began), denounced the Azusa Street Revival (from which most modern Pentecostals trace their origins), led by the black preacher, William J. Seymour, as being nothing but "hypnotism" and "spiritualism" – a case of "spiritual power prostituted." See Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971) p. 112.

4. John Robert Stevens, "How God Met Me in Psalm 144," Living Word Tapes (17 AUG 75).

5. John Robert Stevens, "An Explanation of Free Spirits and Spiritual Potential," Living Word Tapes (no date).

6. John Robert Stevens, "The New Step Into the Day of Revelation, Part II", Living Word Tapes (15 DEC 72).

7. John Robert Stevens, from a private tape recorded at a Grace Chapel of South Gate, CA, Friday Night Bible School message (10 MAR 61).

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. George H. Warnock, *The Feast of Tabernacles* (Springfield, MO: Bill Britton Edition, July 1951), pp. 111-112.

Chapter Five:

The Early Walk – Part Three

The Word of Knowledge

Something else happened in 1953 that made John Robert sure that all of the charges against him were false. For this was the year he began moving in one of the other hotly contested gifts of the restoration movement: William Branham's second sign – the word of knowledge. Whatever the "word of knowledge" was originally conceived as being by the apostle Paul and the New Testament Church (one would assume it had something to do with a form of spiritual understanding needed for teaching, preaching, and the correct interpretation of Scripture), it had an almost mystical (or psychic) meaning among the leaders of the Latter Rain Movement.

Thanks mainly again to the ministry of William Branham, the gift of knowledge was largely a form of extrasensory perception (ESP) where the recipient would know the names and past events in the lives of people he had never met before. To Branham, this gift constituted the second sign his angel gave to him as a confirmation of his ministry (the first sign had been vibrations in his right hand). According to David Edwin Harrell, Jr.:

> This gift, which many insisted was "exactly 100 per cent" successful, made Branham "a channel for more than the mere gift of healing" – it made him a "Seer as were the Old Testament prophets."[1]

For Branham, this gift proved to be the icing on the cake. Thousands flocked to his meetings driven by the power of curiosity alone:

> Ern Baxter, who ministered with Branham for four to eight months every year from 1947 until 1953, said that he never saw his discernment miss once. According to James Watt, whenever Ern Baxter was given a card containing information on the individual's medical history, Branham was able, in every case, to correctly diagnose the illness without ever knowing what was on the card in Baxter's hand.[2]

Once again the similarities between the ministries of William Branham and John Robert Stevens are incredible. William Branham received vibrations in his right hand, John Robert Stevens received vibrations in his left hand (moving to his right hand a year later). William Branham received the gift of knowledge as his second sign of confirmation from his angel; John Robert Stevens received this same gift two years following his initial impartation. The way that he received this gift and what he did with it is well worth documenting.

South San Diego Enlightenment

In 1953, Pastor J. 0. Dowell was leading a small church at 641 S. Boundary St. in South San Diego, California.[3] Dowell's brother, who lived in Los Angeles, had been periodically attending Grace Chapel of South Gate, and was enamored of the preaching of John Robert Stevens. He soon contacted J.0. and suggested that he invite Stevens down to San Diego as a guest preacher.

J.0. thought it would be a good idea and asked John Robert, who was more than happy to oblige (this happened during the days of persecution from the local Pentecostals).

Stevens first spoke at J.0. Dowell's church on a Monday night, and immediately Dowell felt that there was something not quite right about John Robert's approach. It wasn't that what he preached sounded like heresy, but it was the way he addressed the congregation: as if they were part of a privileged elite who had endured in the faith long enough to have witnessed the coming of the apostolic ministry of John Robert Stevens. According to Dowell, the first thing John Robert said was, "I'm surprised you people all stayed together here until I arrived to start preaching."[4]

It is hard to tell exactly what he meant by this statement, but it was probably some sort of Pentecostal in-joke, referring to the notorious Pentecostal tendency toward division and controversy, or maybe even that it was amazing that people that were so enlightened as to be willing to hear him had managed to stay together within the context of traditional Pentecostalism so long. Whatever he meant, it served as a harbinger of the central problem that faced the future of his ministry: the fact that his ministry was the focus of the eschatological drama.

However, any reservations that either Dowell or his congregation had about John Robert was quickly dissipated as he suddenly began to move in the gift of knowledge. He told people what their names were and what was wrong with them. One woman approached him for personal directive prophecy and John Robert knew immediately what her problem was. "Your heart is black," he told her. "You are gathering crumbs, never settled down to have the whole loaf. You are a runaround – a member of the Tribe of Gad."[5]

Everyone was shocked. Stevens had never seen this woman before but yet had accurately described her before the whole congregation. For years this woman had gone to and fro to different churches, to listen to new preachers, never settling down in one place. From that night on John Robert Stevens was welcomed with open arms.

Later that same night, at Dowell's house (where John Robert was staying while in San Diego), Stevens asked Dowell what exactly it was that he had been doing during the service. "What have I said to these people?" he asked.[6] He had never moved in the gift of knowledge before and wanted to know what it was, and if it was all right to move in it. Dowell explained to him what the gift was and that it was all right to continue moving in it – at least in his church. For the next two months, John Robert continued to drive to San Diego to minister in J.0. Dowell's church on Monday nights.

Intercession

John Robert's new gift did not come without adversity. During the year prior to receiving this new gift, he had been bleeding severely in his rectum and kidneys.[7] If this was not bad enough, all during the early Fifties he suffered from terrible mouth sores, and as a result of all this, finally asked his congregation at Grace Chapel to pray and intercede for him. This is an important event, because in the future, John Robert would not only accredit new revelations and spiritual breakthroughs to the faithful intercession of his followers, but would develop the idea of violent

intercession as a necessary prerequisite for pressing him into the highest plane of revelation, the Kingdom, so that he would be able to usher in the "manifestation." However, it must not be forgotten, that after this initial request for intercession, whatever severe trial or spiritual impasse he was not able to overcome, would also be attributed to the slacking off of his followers. In other words, the relationship between John Robert and his followers is indispensable for understanding the spiritual dynamics of the Walk.

As it was, John Robert more than likely interpreted his new gift as the result of the faithful intercession of Grace Chapel, as well as a spiritual reward to him from God for faithfully enduring the severe pain of his physical ailments. At the end of 1953, God once again came to John Robert in the word of knowledge:

> "And the Lord spoke to me and He said, "Stand!" And I stood. And He said, "Point to the south, south east! Point to the northwest! For in those two areas . . . . I'm going to bring forth churches that are going to do my will. You'll go to the San Fernando Valley first!" And I did. "And you'll go down to Orange County!" And I did."[8]

These were, of course, prophecies of the future churches he would establish in Sepulveda (the Church of the Living Word) and Anaheim (the Church of His Holy Presence), California. What it shows us, of course, is that John Robert had expansion on his mind at a very early date. In fact, as we shall soon see, some of his methods for expansion were not only unorthodox, they were downright nothing but spiritual rustling, otherwise known in Pentecostal circles as "sheep-stealing." A sheep-stealer was always an "empire builder," that is, one who is trying to set up a spiritual kingdom (composed of as much physical property as possible) on earth, with himself as its king.

This is quite clearly brought out by John Robert's performance in Honolulu, Hawaii, where he not only was guilty of sheep-stealing, he was guilty of ripping-off an entire congregation.

Honolulu

J.0. Dowell's brother, Eddy, had once been part of the AOG and had led a fruitful healing ministry in Lima, Peru for many years, literally bringing hundreds of Peruvians into the AOG fold. However, the AOG resolution against personal directive prophecy was a burr in his saddle, for he knew that according to the apostle Paul (I Cor. 14:1,39), the gift of prophecy was the greatest gift. It was the Latter Rain emphasis on personal directive prophecy and the "signs" ministry (i.e., the healing and the word of knowledge gifts) that drew Eddy to John Robert Stevens and Grace Chapel. However, his enthusiasm toward John Robert was soon to turn to bitter water.

In 1954, Eddy Dowell left California for Honolulu, to help his sister, who was struggling to establish a Salvation Army outpost in the Islands. As a result of their combined efforts, they soon had set up a small local church in Honolulu. Unfortunately, at a critical moment of the church's growth, Eddy had to return to Los Angeles for an emergency in his family. In his time of need, he turned to his good friend, John Robert Stevens, for assistance. John Robert gladly responded to Eddy's request that he go to Honolulu and help to establish the small church in the Word.

It had been a good year for John Robert. He had been moving in stronger and more powerful ministry. He had spent 8-12 hours every day for seven months waiting on the Lord to learn His voice.[9] John Robert knew that Jesus had been able to do great and mighty works because He had been able to see and hear what His Father was saying and doing. Therefore, it was imperative for him to learn God's voice so that he could faithfully follow in his master's footsteps.

It came as a great shock to Eddy Dowell to learn that within a few weeks after John Robert had arrived in Honolulu, his entire flock had left him to follow in the footsteps of their new master, John Robert Stevens. Eddy Dowell gave up his ministry and has never recovered from this incident. He has never preached the gospel since 1955. However, John Robert continued to follow what he believed to be the voice of God.

The Wisdom of Solomon

Even though John Robert Stevens refused to be identified with the Latter Rain Movement, he still continued to go to their meetings whenever he had an opportunity. He was not the only one. Many denominational Pentecostals were being attracted to the new movement in the mid-Fifties. Almost without exception, whenever Stevens would attend one of their services, the preacher would lay hands on him and give him personal directive prophecy. Uncannily, they would all give him the same prophecy: "God was giving him the wisdom of Solomon and the strength of Samson."[10]

Prophecies like this made Stevens bolder in his belief that he was surely the apostle of the Kingdom, even though the main reason for this kind of prophecy from the Latter Rainers was more than likely a ruse to coerce Stevens into joining their movement. They must have been quite perplexed that if he had the "wisdom of Solomon" then how come he wasn't joining their ranks? Stevens, of course, chose to remain independent, choosing his own interpretation.

During 1955, John Robert spend a considerable amount of his personal time helping out with the Meals for Millions project that had been set up to give relief to the millions of Mexicans who had been victims of severe flooding in Mexico. Since it would be hard to pin-down an ulterior motive for Stevens' actions in this project, it bears out our interpretation that John Robert was a sincere pastor operating under what he believed was the real guidance of the Holy Spirit. One ex-member of Grace Chapel was both impressed by the "self-sacrifice and humility" shown by John Robert during this time, but was also amazed by his "feelings and symptomatic signs" that he had begun having in 1954. These were burning sensations felt in all areas of his body, either giving him knowledge of what ailed other people (he could feel where the other person felt pain) or were interpreted to give him knowledge of a spiritual assault on another person (or himself), or discernment of spiritual things.

Once, while driving down to Mexicali during the Meals for Millions Project, Stevens discerned the spirits (i.e., the ruling elemental spiritual force) of each area as they drove through it by interpreting the burning sensations in his body, especially the signs in his hand. According to Stevens, he was "hard hit" (i.e., spiritually assaulted) during this period.[11]

His problems did not come solely from the spirit world during this period. In 1956, George Hawtin himself came to Grace Chapel and tried to persuade John Robert to join the Latter Rain Movement. Not only did Stevens manage to exercise his "wisdom of Solomon and strength of Samson" in standing against Hawtin, he was also able to keep Hawtin from stealing any of his members, keeping Grace Chapel largely intact and under his submission. Stevens was quite aware that within a movement that does not recognize denominational structure, authority, or organization, there is only one type of hierarchy that takes it place: the hierarchy of personal charisma. In this instance, it is probable that John Robert Stevens (feeling no need to submit to George Hawtin, feeling that his apostolic ministry was far above Hawtin's old order ministry) was more highly regarded in the eyes of his congregation for being able to stand up to such a highly revered figure such as George Hawtin. If Stevens could do that with little or no trouble, they might have reasoned, then maybe he is truly who he says he is: the apostle of the Kingdom.[12]

The Kingdom is Within

It was also during this time that Stevens read Norman Vincent Peal's rehash of works-believism, *The Power of Positive Thinking.* In a service at Grace Chapel, Stevens told his congregation that Peal's book contained a certain amount of half-truth, operating mainly on the "soulish" realm: "They're [the positive-thinking school] trying to bring forth in the soulish (psychic) what only God can."[13]

According to Stevens, the real key was not "positive thinking" but the knowledge that "everything that God is trying to do is within you – 'the kingdom of God is within you.'"[14] This knowledge is the key to understanding the Beatitudes, which for John Robert was an important part of his Kingdom message. To the traditional Pentecostal, brought up on the dispensationalism of C.I. Scofield, the Beatitudes, indeed, the whole Sermon on the Mount, was not for the Church Age, but was for the Kingdom Age. Thus, when John Robert began teaching from the Beatitudes, he not only began stepping on a lot of Pentecostal toes, he was quite literally, announcing the beginning of the Kingdom Age:

> "People have never been holy enough to do the will of God . . . . But the day ahead of us is seeing God bring forth His righteousness and His holiness in the lives of the people as they've never seen it before. Don't be afraid, my friend, of the day we're in. We're on the threshold of a whole new era. That era's going to see the "old life" Christianity – that oftentimes has been organization and man-made denomination – sometimes, it hasn't had the life of God in it. You're going to see that day disappear, and we're going to come into a time when God imparts – when God imputes His righteousness to people. And then the earth will be righteous. Then they're going to be real Christians. And we're in the beginning of that now."[15]

If this were not enough in itself, he then went on to demolish the whole foundation of the dispensational school of Darby and C.I. Scofield: he denied that there would be a pre-tribulation rapture of the saints. He showed how in Luke 17:26 it was the one left behind (not the one taken) who was saved. Stevens said, mocking the dispensationalists, that he wanted to be the one left behind.[16]

There must have been some serious doubts about John Robert's new interpretation, for by 1957, Grace Chapel was only half full for the Feast of Tabernacles.[17] This meant that approximately only 150 people were left in the Walk faithful. It was now obvious, especially after having already gone through almost three congregations that John Robert was at a stage where he wanted and needed a faithful following that will intercede for him in his crucial ministry of laying the foundation of the Kingdom. Even though he had moved to Burbank in 1956 [18] (where he began another small fellowship in a follower's home), Grace Chapel of South Gate remained his primary focus.

Earlier that same year, in July 1957, God had given John Robert instructions for the church. These instructions consisted of five main points:

1. The return of the vision and the opening of spiritual sight in these days.
2. The return of the glory of God that shall rest upon us in these days.
3. The beholding of the Lord, which shall be a distinct experience preserved for this hour and opening up like a bridge – the passing from one walk into another walk with God.
4. The conjunction of two worlds -- the spirit realm working in closer and closer conjunction with those of us chosen for these last days events.
5. The living word -- it is tested now, but it will become a flow, having all the characteristics and power and authority that was ascribed to the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ in His flesh – it shall involve authority over nature and so forth.[19]

By September of 1957, Stevens was preaching on the third point: the beholding of the Lord. This was a remarkable sermon, a super-spiritualization of I John 1:1-4 and 3:2-6, as well as the idea in the Beatitudes that the pure in heart will see God (Mt. 5:8). It is a sermon well worth elaborating on for it reveals something about the Walk that is crucial to understand: a sincere desire to see God.

The Beholding of the Lord

According to John Robert and his message of 9 SEP 57, the first stage of the *parousia* of Jesus (His presence in His saints) would be characterized by the "beholding of the Lord." To Stevens, there was a distinction between "seeing" the Lord and "knowing" Him. In other words, people in the Church Age were able to know the Lord, but those chosen elite who will experience the "manifestation" will "see" Him in His true glory. It is in this "seeing" that they will be transfigured. This "seeing" will take place as the result of spiritual revelation by those who have attained a specified level of spiritual purity:

> If you have the hope of seeing, the Bible says you purify yourself . . . ."And unto those that look for Him...SHALL HE APPEAR A SECOND TIME – WITHOUT SIN UNTO SALVATION!" There's an appearance of the Lord that is going to come to you and I as we purify ourselves and make ourselves ready, and when He appears unto us, we will be there from that time on without sin, under the tremendous deliverance to walk in the purity in the perfection of Sonship forever more ...Well, then, what's the answer to this great question: Are we Sons yet? In this sense, we're not the full mature Sons. I believe some of us are embracing Sonship. Oh, you say,

> You tell me now I'm not a Son of God? Sure! Listen: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to *become* the Sons of God." You say, I thought I was born of God? You are? Well, there's a difference between a child and a Son. And when you accepted Him you were born of Him – you're begotten of Him – but you'll grow up from a child to a Son and that's when He'll write His name upon you! Amen.[20]

Here we see a cleverly disguised form of works-believism in the context of purifying the flesh. Justification, the basis of Christian salvation, is twisted so that it becomes the result of the process of sanctification. In other words, what Stevens has basically done is to mystify the Christian growth process, as well as what the Christian already has in Christ, turning it into something that can only be attained through spiritual exercise: Sonship gained by works. Thus, the Walk makes a believer work for something that is already his by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross; making him believe that justification can only be his by the direct appropriation of the future resurrection life in the here and now:

> You see, when He first appears to us He changes our body like unto His glorious body! That's the way John reads, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." All right? When we wait for Him and we see Him descend from heaven [i.e., by beholding Him], we are going to find our vile body changed like unto His glorious body. And that's going to be a power and a working in us – full grace – that whereby, that means by that thing working, He is able to subdue all things under Himself. The beginning of all creation being set right under the Son of God comes when He appears to you and He changes you into His image [i.e., the appropriation of the "manifestation"]. And that same working, working through you, will bring everything into subjection to the Lord. That's what it says! That's what it says![21]

That this is basically a rehash of Eastern Mysticism becomes more clear in the conclusion of his sermon where he discusses John 17: 20-26, about the disciples being able to "behold" the glory of Jesus:

> Now what does He mean: "That where I am, there you may be also."? What is He talking to His disciples? He didn't mean that He was floating off to heaven, that where He was, there you might be also. No, no, no, no! He was praying like this: "You see what I have attained: you, as begotten Sons of the Father. Now, I pray for you, that you attain to Sonship as I have – that where I am, you'll come to be also. Then you can behold my glory. Amen." Hallelujah! That's why you're growing up unto the Lord. You're coming up to where He is, in Him, then you can see His glory.[22]

This was Stevens' own elaboration of Warnock's idea that the many mansions of John 14:1 were abodes, or stations – that is, planes that the believer reached by appropriating more and more spiritual revelation while still down here on earth in this life, in this age. "The Beholding of the Lord" was one of the bold new revelations that John Robert Stevens, the apostle of the Kingdom, was laying as the foundation for the new age that was dawning.

Notes:

1. David Edwin Harrell, Jr. *All Things Are Possible* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 38.

2. Richard Michael Riss, *The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Awakening* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Thesis, April 1979), p. 61.

3. J.0. Dowell, in telephone interview with Woodrow Nichols (22 OCT 79). Most of the information regarding John Robert Stevens and "the word of knowledge" is taken from this interview.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. John Robert Stevens, "A Workshop of Intercession," Living Word Tapes(22 JAN 77). Stevens also notes on this tape that this bleeding occurred right after Martha passed her driving test.

8. John Robert Stevens, "All Around Grace Chapel of South Gate," Living Word Tapes (16 MAR 77).

9. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at the Church of the Living Word, Sepulveda, CA (23 MAR 66).

10. Private interview between an ex-Walk member (1954-1966) who wishes to remain anonymous) and Woodrow Nichols (24 OCT 79). A transcript of this interview is on file at SCP.

11. Ibid.

12. In non-denominational Pentecostalism, it is a regular occurrence of charismatic leaders ripping-off members of another leader's flock, sometimes the whole flock itself, or by the leader of the flock submitting to the charismatic leader's authority. In fact, there is an invisible hierarchy in Neo-Pentecostalism today that is constantly shifting, but is just as real and influential as that of the Roman Catholic Church.

13. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Grace Chapel of South Gate, evening service (1956).

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Like all churches affiliated with the Latter Rain Movement, Stevens and the Walk observed the Feast of Tabernacles.

18. Martha Stevens, declaration in divorce papers as filed with Superior Court of California, Los Angeles County, case no. D973296 (2 NOV 78), p. 1; and Stevens, "All Around Grace Chapel...," Ibid.

19. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Grace Chapel of South Gate, Monday night service (9 SEP 57).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

Chapter Six:

The First Principles

Laying the Foundation

Although the facts are by no means clear, it appears that in the year 1957, the AOG were investigating John Robert Stevens and Grace Chapel in an effort to collect enough evidence so that they could ban members from attending his services. Most of the information of this incident seems to have come from a file that John Robert had access to, intimating that the Southern California District Council of the Assemblies of God had been sending agents to Grace Chapel in an attempt to hear some of the more secret, controversial teachings they knew he was expounding.

Whether the AOG was really doing this or not is not really the point. What is the point is the fact that if they did want to know exactly what John Robert was teaching, it would be the only way they would have of finding out. This is because John Robert never wrote any concise account of what he believed were the foundational truths of the new age. If, as has been intimated, the AOG were concerned about charges of Spiritualism being taught at Grace Chapel, one could hardly blame them for such a covert method of inquiry. However, to the reactionary mind of John Robert, this sort of inquiry was nothing less than Satan-inspired. After all, the AOG had kicked him out without a cause, had not recognized his special apostolic ministry, and now were infiltrating his meetings with spies. What else could it mean that they were agents of the Devil, sent to attack his ministry, or as Stevens was to call them in the mid-Sixties, they were ***Nephilim***: devils in the flesh:

> Three very strong spiritual people – spirit people – great devils, were sent out in 1957. Three Nephilim, according to the record, this file [the AOG file he had access to], were sent against me. And I knew about them. One thing is almost incredible was that the head of the Southern California District Council in the Assemblies of God is a Nephilim.[1]

This was John Robert's answer to any potential accusation against him: all those that opposed his divine mission were agents of the Devil, that is, Nephilim. It was primarily as a result of self-protection that mainly kept him from codifying the foundational truths of the new age in written form. What he did eventually publish were nothing but outlines with proof texts, meant not only to give basic Bible studies, but also to hint at some of the more secret teachings that lay beyond the understanding of the average member. This is made very clear in the first major work that he released in his new role as chief spokesman for the new dispensation. He called this work, appropriately enough, *The First Principles*. His first edition was self-published under the name of Robert Stevens. They were, as he said in the preface, a series of outlines to be "used in Bible classes on the missionary field."[2] What he means precisely by the term "first principles" is defined in the glossary in Lesson 33: "In Hebrews 5:12, this term is used to describe the foundational, fundamental teachings of Scriptures which every believer should know."[3] In other words, these outlines were meant to form the foundation for the revelation of the Kingdom. While on the surface, most of the lessons seem innocuous enough, there is enough in them to

show how the Walk is distinct from even the Latter Rain Movement. Stevens hints at this at the end of his preface:

> While this series of Bible lessons are simple and elementary in scope, the average Bible student will soon realize that many Biblical truths and experiences that are taught here are beyond the scope of the average believer's experience. The heart of the studies is the progressive revelation of the scriptures to the believer. From the days of the reformation until the present hour, the church has witnessed a progressive unfolding of the scriptures, until each generation of believers has entered into newly-restored Bible experiences and understanding . . . . Blessed is he that hath ears to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.[4]

The closing sentence, of course, gives the whole game away. What Stevens is talking about is that *The First Principles* itself is a progressive revelation for the believer, and like the book of Revelation, it contains the game plan of the End Time drama. In fact, as the last sentence plainly reveals, *The First Principles* are clearly on the same level as the scriptures themselves, for they not only act as a Rosetta-Stone, helping to decode the Scriptures, but they are in themselves the revealed Word of God – the living word (i.e., equal to the Scriptures themselves).

Even the order of *The First Principles* is laid out progressively for believers in three sections, each section for a different level of understanding and spiritual growth: Section 1: Milk for the Babes; Section 2: Bread for the Little Children; Section 3: Meat for the Young Men. The order of lessons as they appear is no accident, meaning that the lessons in the later sections are more spiritual than the previous ones. Thus, in the guise of elementary Bible studies, Stevens has offered all those who wish to enter into the esoteric land of Christian mysticism, a primrose path to the gate. However, to go beyond the gate, one must need the help of an interpreter, and that is precisely what the ministry of John Robert Stevens, the apostle of the Kingdom, is all about – to those who have the eyes to see, of course.

Terminology

Fortunately for any serious student of *The First Principles*, John Robert included a glossary in Lesson 33. This glossary is virtually the key to understanding the "elementary" Bible study outlines that make up this book. A good definition to begin with is the one titled, "Restoration or Restitution of All Things," for this definition is not only the heart and soul of what the Walk is, but it is also the definition from which all the other definitions are defined:

> God's bringing back the church to its New Testament condition (Acts) and glory. Acts 3:21. The correct translation of this verse reads, "until the time for the establishing of all of those things spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy prophets . . . ." What God is doing today is more than a Restoration of the New Testament church – It is the establishing of His Kingdom on earth through the ministry of a church restored to its New Testament glory and more.[5]

What John Robert means by "more" is, of course, for the reader to find out. However, only in the context of the Walk will he ever find out. This is because all other churches, organizations,

denominations, or movements outside of the Walk are actually part of Babylon. Of course, this is not stated explicitly in his definition of Babylon, but those who have the true revelation will understand that the only movement outside of Babylon is indeed the Walk:

> BABYLON: In Genesis 11, Babylon was the origin of religious confusion. Thus Babylon in the book of Revelation, chapters 17 and 18, is a symbol of Romanism and Protestantism in all of its denominational aspects, a source of confusion and unfaithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18 is in contrast to the true church, the Bride of Christ of Revelation 19.[6]

To Stevens, only the Walk aptly fits this definition, for if everything outside of God's true movement is Babylon, and if the Walk is the true movement of God's Spirit in the End Time, then it follows that everything outside of the Walk is therefore Babylon. In other words, only the Walk is truly walking in the light of the New Testament church "and more." Or, to be fair, only the Walk has a real fighting chance of "becoming" the true New Testament in the End Time and, thus, usher in the Kingdom Age.

Since Stevens defines "Sectarianism" in Lesson 29 as "sin and death to the Church," and "the work of the flesh," and as "sin against the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ,"[7] the Walk has gone out of the way to deny that it is a denomination or affiliated with any other movement (thus his emphatic denials of being associated with the Latter Rain Movement). However, under the surface of the churches associated with the Walk is an authority structure much more tyrannical and repressive than any found in the sects that have supposedly usurped the headship of Christ. The foundation for this authority structure is clearly laid in the definition for "Submission":

> SUBMISSION: Is the accepting the control or authority of another, being obedient and compliant to those over you in the Lord. Ephesians 5:21 to 6:9 and Hebrews 13:17 teach the New Testament pattern for submission to divinely appointed authority in the home and in the church.[8]

It is no accident that Stevens picked the words "control" and "compliance" to describe the role of both the person in authority and the person under authority. While the Scriptures, of course, call for a type of obedience to those over you in the Lord, it is certainly no manifesto for absolute obedience, the kind that Stevens is calling for. After all, every believer is ultimately responsible to God alone. A system of total obedience to those over you completely undermines this Biblical principle, leading ultimately to the Nazi ethic of innocence in the light of obeying orders. The Nazi ethic and the type of totalitarian obedience Stevens has in mind is an analogy that should not be lightly dismissed.

This type of submission is further strengthened by the role of John Robert Stevens and the non-denominational character of the Walk. If Stevens is truly the most important character in the eschatological drama, the apostle of the Kingdom, then what he says is gospel truth. Therefore it is imperative that what he says must be accepted, believed, and obeyed at all costs. It is this role of obedience and submission that also forms the glue that holds the Walk together, for there being no formal legal structure between the churches in the Walk, only submission to the authority of John Robert Stevens provides the necessary union and hope of future

"manifestation" when Stevens, their apostle, is pressed into the Kingdom by their faithful intercession.[9]

And just to make sure that no one has misunderstood the full dimensions of the definition of submission, Stevens follows it with one on rebellion:

> REBELLION: Resistance to authority, or defiance of authority. This spiritual condition of rebellion is the problem of this age – II Peter 2:9-19, and seems to be the greatest problem in the lives of God's people, that hinders their walking in a true ministry before the Lord.[10]

Even though this definition is basically true, it can be easily used by unscrupulous men to keep believers in bondage if and when they feel, because of conscience' sake, to disagree with those in authority above them. It also leads to the psychology that it is better to obey one's superiors rather than risk being labeled a rebel. We must remember that John Robert went through three congregations in the first ten years of the Walk. In these definitions he was making sure that in the future, a member would surely think twice before he either challenged the authority of John Robert or considered leaving the Walk altogether.

However, if it only was fear that Stevens had at his service to keep members in the Walk, he would have failed miserably. It, was, of course, the pride of elitism, the pride of super-spirituality that those who "had the revelation" could exercise and experience that was the true source of strength behind the fabric of the Walk. The definitions given to prophecy, revelation, and the living word helped to instill this pride in the faithful.

The Living Word

Perhaps the idea that is most behind the Walk's ideology is that of the *rhema*, the living word, that is, the word spoken in the here and now through a human mouth by direct revelation. This *rhema* not only provides the framework for new revelation (or progressive revelation), but it also provides the syntax of the Walk's blatantly occultic divinization of man doctrine. To tackle the idea of the "living word" one step at a time, we must first look at John Robert's definition of prophecy:

> PROPHECY: Prophecy is an utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit of truths divinely revealed. Prophecy in the Bible sometimes meant foretelling events, or predicting, but the Gift of prophecy is given to edify, exhort and to comfort. See I Corinthians, chapter 14. Hence, the prophecies in the services may be only for the comfort of the people, and not for prediction of future happenings.[11]

Two things are basically covered here. First, the reality of direct communication from God through a human agency, through "an utterance." Second, this definition provides Stevens with an excellent loophole for prophecies (he has made several predictions in his ministry) that do not come to pass, for he can always claim that the prophecy was meant to comfort and not to predict. This loophole is a common one among Neo-Pentecostals today. But to get back to the first item, the reality of an utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit is the basis of the *rhema*, for the *rhema* is

the utterance itself, that is, a revelation of the Word of God. This is made even more clear by John Robert's definition of revelation:

> REVELATION: The manifestation by God of His will and truths to man. I Peter 1:10-12 shows that the prophets received these revelations from God that constitute the Bible. God is still showing His will and His truths to man.[12]

In other words, the original Scriptures came through the revelation process by divine utterance (prophecy), and in the same way, God's Word still comes forth today. A better definition for progressive revelation, especially revelation that is on a par with the Scriptures themselves, could not have been made. To Stevens, the modern day prophecies are on an equal basis as the Bible because they are coming from the same source, and thus, are living words from God – His *rhema*, His spoken Word, free and unbound by any written words or book. All of these strands come together in his definition of the living word:

> THE LIVING WORD: The letter of the Old Law, and the Scriptures as taught by men devoid of the Holy Spirit is death, and gives no life. II Corinthians 3: 6-8. But the Word of God, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and spoken under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is living and life-giving. Hebrews 4: 12. We speak of the "Living Word", now, as that anointed utterance of a Word from God, because that Word is living, and it gives life.[13]

In other words, the Holy Bible by itself is dead, even spoken by someone preaching as long as the Holy Spirit is not present illuminating the speaker and the hearers. Thus, without the Holy Spirit present, that is, in the speaker, there is no real Word of God. Thus, when Stevens brings forth the revelation of the Scriptures, it is the true Word of God, because he is the anointed apostle. This is why his words are equated with Scripture, because without his prophetic utterance there would be no living Word of God, just the dead letter: ". . . .the Scriptures are not truly the foundation without an apostolic revelation of what the Scriptures teach."[14]

To make sure that no one misunderstands his intentions, Stevens further elaborates on this issue in Lesson 40: "The Living Word: The Unfolding Revelation of the Word":

1) The created Word. (By God showing His Handiworks) . . . .
2) The Written Word (By God Speaking to Man) . . . .
3) The Living Word in Jesus Christ . . . .
4) The Living Word in the Body of Christ, the Church.[15]

According to Stevens, this is the progressive, historical unfolding of the Living Word. Thus, the final, perfect end to God's purpose is the Body of Christ, the Church, or according to Stevens, the Holy Bible in the flesh: "The Church is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Ephesians 1:23."[16] What this means to Stevens is that as God became man in His Son Jesus Christ, so the Church, being Jesus Christ on earth, will, in fact, become God as Jesus is God at the manifestation of the Sons of God. In other words, Sonship to Stevens is not just adoption, as in traditional orthodoxy, but an actual appropriation of divinity. This kind of thinking comes

primarily from the Latter Rain Movement's overemphasis and overidentification of the Church as being inseparate from Jesus Christ Himself, a teaching Stevens was in full accord with:

> The Living Word begins with the incarnation of Christ in human form, but it does not end there. Christ was the expression of God to man of Himself in order that we might receive the Word in our Flesh. God wants us to become the Living Word also. Let the Word be made flesh in us . . . . This is the Bible that the world is to read, not the written Bible.[17]

Thus, the Walk is actually a Third Testament of the Holy Bible, not written, however, but *in the flesh*, that is, incarnated. This view not only greatly diminishes the actual Scriptures themselves, but it also raises the members of the Walk, those who are incarnating the Word, to the level of divinity. Of course, to Stevens, this view does not diminish the Scriptures; it magnifies them:

> Somebody said one time, we-exalt prophecy above the Scriptures. That's a lie! Because we exalt the Scriptures *because* we have prophecy! It's the prophetic flow that brings us to really understand and glorify the Word that we get. Amen. We are probably a people more given to the Scriptures than anybody I know. I know of no movement. But we would not be given to this word so much if it were not for the flow of the Word that opens up the Word to us. Amen.
>
> You cannot get away from it, there has to be both. Amen. *Has* to be both! If we just had prophecy without the foundation of the Word we would be nowhere. But it's the prophetic flow that opens up this book! It's opening up this book!
>
> How many people are coming across these glorious truths all by themselves? The world is full of people with Bibles! But it's an apostolic Word of the Kingdom, it's the *rhema* coming forth that is opening up the Scriptures with a light and an understanding that has been veiled in the heart of God! Suddenly, we have a glorious Bible! Because we've had a Living Word![18]

That this means exactly what it sounds like it means is made clear by Stevens in several other places. In fact, it is directly intimated in Lesson 50 of *The First Principles* in which, it should come as no surprise, is the final lesson, the capstone lesson in the progressive revelation of the whole book.

The Divine Nature

Lesson 50 is entitled, "The Three Great Steps in the Perfection of the Church (or an exposition of I Cor. 12 & 13)." Using I Corinthians 12:1-7 as his proof text, John Robert outlines the three phases, as he sees it, of the perfection of the saints:

> v. 4 Diversities of gifts – by the same (Holy) Spirit.
>
> v. 5 Diversities of administrations (Ministries) by the same Lord (Jesus Christ).

> v. 6 Diversities of operations (energies) by the same (Father) God.
>
> This would indicate that we come into the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, then we grow or develop in the Lord Jesus Christ into a ministry as a member of the Body of Christ, and finally we are in-dwelt by the fullness of God unto the release of His great energizing or operations through us.[19]

Of course, never in the Scriptures themselves, especially I Corinthians 12: 1-7, are these three items even hinted at being stages or phases of Christian development. The logical meaning in the text implies that all three items are co-existent at the same time in the life of the Church, none necessarily higher or lower than the other. However, Stevens uses them to build his many-tiered conception of perfectionism in this life – the final phase culminating in the fullness of God:

> Step 1 shows the endowments that rest upon us BY THE SPIRIT IN US.
>
> Step 2 shows what we are becoming in relation to the Lord, IN CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE BODY.
>
> Step 3 shows what God will become in us, GOD IN US.[20]

That Stevens' idea of "God in us" transcends the traditional orthodox interpretation (the one that takes all Scripture together into account) can be seen by a few further references on this subject made in other sermons. In a sermon titled, "The Word Became Flesh," given the next year, in 1959, Stevens comes right to the point and lays his cards flat on the table:

> Jesus Christ came to participate in humanity and make the bridge of communication so that God could communicate Himself into our very beings. What He is, we become.[21]

To back up this claim, Stevens goes to II Peter 1:4, quoting the apostle Peter's comment of being "partakers of the divine nature" to mean that we shall actually become divine, that is, we shall become God. And just in case he hasn't yet made himself crystal clear, he is quite explicit in his sermon titled, "Who Is He? Who Am I?": "If God could become man, He enabled man to become God – to take on that divine nature."[22] Of course, it came as no surprise to John Robert that those who were still caught up in the Old Order orthodoxy couldn't understand this revelation without crying, Heresy! It was simple to Stevens: they couldn't understand it because they didn't have the revelation:

> I look around here and I see you brothers and I'm concerned about the Word of the Lord over you and that you have the revelation of who you are, and I have the revelation of who you are. And if we don't have that revelation over each other, I wonder do we have the revelation of Him, either. Because it all starts with having a revelation of the Lord. Flesh and blood doesn't reveal that to you. Nobody can come along and tell you in the Walk, "Well, you know, you've got to accept Brother Stevens because you know who he is, don't you?" You better find it out from the Lord! You don't find me telling you, either.[23]

Even the divine apostleship of John Robert Stevens is a matter of revelation to those in the Walk! However, lest one think that this need for an individual revelation makes the Walk individualistic, it must be remembered that in the Walk, the "manifestation" is a totally corporate event. In fact, not even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will be an individual at that time. He makes this clear in a sermon titled, "The Course of Change":

> The third chapter of II Corinthians was one of the first chapters to be revealed – really revealed – in this Walk with God. I can remember back many, many years ago that that word began to just come alive and I've made reference to it very frequently, because it shows the keys of change, and I think that at no time should you read the eighth chapter of Romans without reading the third and fourth chapters of II Corinthians. Why? Because when you talk about the "manifestation of the Sons of God," you're talking about Christ being manifested within us. And you're not talking about something that is not an organism in nature.
>
> This is a great point! It's a point of criticism in some of the letters of persecution that have tried to define our doctrine. They say that we say we're Christ. And they said, "God is God and man is man, and that's the way it is. That's the way it's always going to be!"
>
> Now, let me point out how wrong that they are. The whole purpose that God has is to transform us into the same image, from glory to glory . . . . It's one Spirit. It's one integral essence that God is bringing forth in the earth. This is the great miracle . . . . I hope you're understanding a little bit about this because what we're dealing about – being led by the Spirit – is more than just Christ moving and we all trail on behind Him with a distinction in Spirit, as though we were many different essences. See! We're one in Spirit! . . . . In the Spirit, Christ has relinquished His individuality. And in the Spirit, we come into this Walk – we relinquish our individuality.[24]

As can be seen, what John Robert has done to basic Scripture is to twist it into Hinduistic conceptions of salvation through absorption into the Godhood with the consequent loss of individuality. In fact, as both the main channel of the Living Word (in his ministry as the apostle of the Kingdom) and the head of its fleshly expression (the Walk), Stevens takes his loss of individuality and identity with Christ to the supreme limit:

> Be the word of the Lord to the people! Be Christ! For many that sounds blasphemous, and the old order thinking backs away from it . . . . I am not a courier of Christ. I am not a messenger of Christ. I am an expression of Christ Himself in the earth.[25]

Yes, many thought that this comment bordered on blasphemy. In fact, in an answer to a charge that this quote smacked of occultism and Spiritualism (made by the SCP in the SEP 76 newsletter), Stevens defended himself with this statement:

> Well, see, we're a many-membered body, "as Christ is not one member but many, so also is Christ." We are part of Christ! See, we're part of His expression. This is the thing that's being criticized. And so, to come right back to it, you could take that

> whole thing and answer it with just one Scripture. You know, this is the issue – this is the spirit of truth and error: "Is Christ come in the flesh?" And the issue is: Yes, yes, He has!
>
> You see, this is it! And this is the issue. Thank God, this is the issue! This is the issue! This is the issue! Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh – Christ is speaking to you. Amen. Okay, some say, "You're confused. You're claiming to be God!" Of course we are! "Exceeding great and precious promises that by these we become partakers of the divine nature" – that whatever God is, we're becoming. Amen.[26]

As we have just seen, the over-identification of the believer with Christ has been a fundamental error in the Walk and in the mind of John Robert Stevens from the very beginning. No wonder it takes a special revelation to apprehend this spiritual truth. After all, it is nowhere taught in the New Testament! But the question naturally arises then: If one cannot come into this knowledge except by revelation, and this revelation is the end revelation in a long progression of revelations (remember, this revelation is the last lesson in the section "Meat for Young Men"), then how can one hope to realize this revelation if one has just started at Lesson l in the *First Principles*? This question is, of course, basic to understanding the emphasis on pressing John Robert into the Kingdom first.

The Impartation of Revelation

When John Robert Stevens, as the apostle of the Kingdom Age, is finally pressed into the Kingdom plane of revelation by the faithful and violent intercession of his followers, then he will be able to return and usher them into the Kingdom by the direct impartation of the Kingdom plane of revelation by the laying on of hands. To understand this idea we must first examine his definition of impartation:

> IMPARTATION: The bestowal on another of a share or portion of that which God has given to you. In Romans 1:11 Paul longed to impart spiritual gifts to the Roman Christians. God is raising up ministries today that can impart to other believers that which God has endowed them.[27]

This means that a person can only give someone else what they themselves have already received. This is why the "initial impartation" that John Robert received at the hands of Winston I. Nunes is so important. We must remember that following this impartation he began having a "signs" ministry in his left hand, which moved to his right hand one year later, signaling the beginning of his apostolic ministry. And two years later he began moving in the word of knowledge. Stevens makes this clear in Lesson 49, "Impartation":

> From the beginning, God perpetuated what He is doing within His men by enabling them to impart that inner divine deposit in a measure to others.[28]

This is also how Christ imparts His inner divine deposit to us: by direct revelation:

> We cannot impart a measure of Christ that we have not appropriated ourselves. You cannot give the spiritual reality of Christ to others if you do not have it yourself.[29]

Thus, if Stevens is unable to apprehend the full divinity of Christ by his violent pressing into the Kingdom, he will be unable to impart it to those in the Walk directly by the laying on of hands:

> Another age, another dispensation – we'll call it a movement of God's Spirit that will make this Walk as obsolete as the old order has been to us. Not obsolete in the sense that we will go against these things, but we will move on from the present way of worshipping and ministering and teaching to the direct impartation of revelation to people . . . . But when we get into the real Kingdom services, it's not going to be what you've learned, it's going to be what's imparted to you.[30]

Unfortunately, the Walk had been going for over ten years by 1961, and still John Robert was not entering into higher planes of revelation. Things were looking pretty dim. But something happened in the Sixties to John Robert and the Walk that radically altered its whole nature. A hint of what happened can be found in the 1970 revised edition of *The First Principles*, where a few new words have been added to the glossary: two of which are "aura" and "contact." Both of these words and their subsequent definitions are straight out of the dictionary of occultism. Stevens defines "aura" as the psychic halo of spiritual energy that surrounds each person like a magnetic field, which, by its color, enables a person with the gift of discernment to determine the person's spiritual condition. His definition of "contact" is straight from the annals of Spiritualism:

> CONTACT: A point of contact with another in the realm of spirit. We can use contact to bless someone, for the blessing of the Lord is a tangible thing.[31]

What happened in the early Sixties that brought such a change to the Walk? What took the Walk from a basic Latter Rain format and placed it within a more Eastern Mystical-occult format? In fact, what changed John Robert Stevens from a Pentecostal preacher moving in Latter Rain revelation into a practicing witch? Yes, it was the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

Notes:

1. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Grace Chapel of South Gate, elders meeting (12 NOV 66).

2. Robert Stevens, *The First Principles* (Burbank, CA: 638 E. Tujunga Ave., 1958), preface no page numbers.

3. Ibid., Lesson 33.

4. Ibid., preface.

5. Ibid., Lesson 33.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., Lesson 29.

8. Ibid., Lesson 33.

9. It is this idea of authority, submission, and obedience that is currently running in rampant error in the Discipleship-Shepherding Movement, as well as other strongholds of Neo-Pentecostalism.

10. Stevens, First Principles, op. cit.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. John Robert Stevens, *Continuing In the Apostles' Teaching* (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 26 DEC, p. 3.

15. Stevens, *First Principles* op. cit., Lesson 40.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. John Robert Stevens, "The Basics of Intercession, #6," Living Word Tapes (11 DEC 76).

19. Stevens, *First Principles*, op. cit., Lesson 50.

20. Ibid.

21. John Robert Stevens, "The Word Became Flesh," *Every Man That Asketh* (Living Word Publications, 1959), p. 48.

22. John Robert Stevens, "Who Is He? Who Am I?" Living Word Tapes (25 DEC 77).

23. Ibid.

24. John Robert Stevens, "The Course of Change," Living Word Tapes (25 DEC 77). The reference to criticism and letters of persecution is made in regards to the SCP critique of the Walk in the SEP 76 SCP newsletter.

25. Stevens, "The Word Became Flesh," op. cit., pp. 50-51.

26. Stevens, "Basics of Intercession. . . ," op. cit., also John Robert Stevens, "Plumb Perfect", The Living Word Today (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 16 JAN 77), p. 13:

> "When you ask the Lord Jesus to come into your heart and to make you a child of God, you do not see the physical manifestation immediately. Something must first be wrought in your nature so that you will want to be a child of God and not a human being. Therefore, the Lord puts you through process that will bring you into sonship, into deity. Do not be passive in the process. Assume the deity that God wants His people to have . . . . What is in Jesus Christ will also be in the members of the Body of Christ: the Word becoming flesh, full grace and truth, the glory of the Father coming forth. God becoming man means nothing unless we become God, unless we become lost in Him.
>
> Perhaps this sounds like heresy, like something distorted, but it is not."

27. Stevens, *First Principles*, op. cit., Lesson 33.

28. Ibid., Lesson 49.

29. Ibid.

30. John Robert Stevens, "The New Step Into the Day of Revelation, Part I," Living Word Tapes (14 DEC 72).

31. John Robert Stevens, *The First Principles*, 4th ed., (Sepulveda, CA: Living Word Publications, 1958) p. 58.

Chapter Seven:

Witchcraft

The Gnostic Key

It is not known exactly how early in his ministry John Robert began to teach hardcore occultism to his followers (that is, in contrast to the softcore Spiritualism and works-believism inherent within the Latter Rain ideology). However, we may begin to pin it down from a statement Stevens made during a 1959 service at Grace Chapel, where he said, in an off-the-cuff manner: "You know, those First Century Gnostics had something – I think they were on to something."[1]

Anyone who is vaguely familiar with Gnosticism knows that it is a syncretic blend of Eastern mysticism, Greek philosophy, Persian dualism, Jewish magic, and bits and pieces of the Christian gospel: all rolled up into one! If Stevens thought that the early Gnostics were on to something, he was right: they were onto a spiritual mishmash that for over three hundred years directly challenged the authority of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. It is more than likely that a modern form of this satanic religion will be the One World Religion of the End Time.

It comes as no wonder, then, that Stevens was mentally and spiritually prepared by infatuation with Gnosticism to be set up for great spiritual deception. He did not have long to wait. A certain woman had been attending Grace Chapel since 1955 and was regarded by the congregation as being a prophetess. She and another woman, an unmarried schoolteacher, would spend minutes and minutes prophesying at the meetings, taking up so much time that occasionally John Robert would have to intervene to end their messages.[2]

According to John Robert, this woman was into yoga and would spend hours standing on her head. Stevens interpreted this later as a satanic plot against his ministry, calling this woman a full-fledged witch, able to manipulate psychic power.[3] In the early Sixties, she had approached Stevens and had asked him if she could become his "spiritual wife." What exactly she meant by this isn't all that clear, but it seems to have meant more than just a supportive relation on the spiritual plane, for Stevens turned her down.[4] After all, adultery is adultery, no matter how smooth the rationalization that goes along with it.

There is no evidence to link Stevens up with yoga at this point, but since he did begin to teach some yoga breathing techniques to the elders of the Valley Church (i.e., The Church of the Living Word, Sepulveda) just a few years after this, it is likely that this woman had some influence over him. After all, the Walk had been in existence over ten years and still Stevens had not attained the revelation of the Kingdom. Maybe there was a technique, a spiritual short-cut, that would enable him to speed up the process? He was definitely thinking in this direction as his statement on Gnosticism clearly shows.

Whatever his relationship with this woman was (it is unlikely that it went beyond shared interests in the occult), she soon began prophesying Martha Stevens's death.[5] It is obvious that she must have something more than spiritual in mind when she first approached John Robert with her

unusual request. However, even though he turned this woman down, John Robert would soon take up the idea with another woman in the new Valley Church.

The Yucaipa Vision

John Robert and his family had moved to Burbank, in the San Fernando Valley, in 1956. It had been revealed to him that the Walk would expand into both the Valley and Orange County.

It took six years for him to bear any fruit in the Valley, but in 1962 a small church was meeting in the home of a local civil engineer and his wife. His wife was an extremely attractive woman and became the source of a terrible controversy in 1967. In fact, this woman was to later call herself the "spiritual wife" of John Robert Stevens, who, at times among some of the seven intercessors (anyone who had a burden for John Robert Stevens, usually the wives of the elders and deacons) at the office referred to her as his "real" wife.[6] Of course, a relationship like this is hard to justify unless there is some sort of specific Biblical revelation to back it up. Stevens found this revelation in a small cabin in Yucaipa, California.

Yucaipa is located in the San Bernardino Mountains, a small town near the desert. Two Walk elders had tried to start a work in Yucaipa (one of them was into real estate) but never managed to get it off the ground. One of them owned a small cabin there and John Robert would go there for retreats, to be alone with the Lord. It would appear that the New Testament qualification for apostleship, that of having a post-resurrection appearance of the Lord, must have been troubling John Robert. After all, wasn't he the apostle of the Kingdom Age, the most important eschatological figure in the End Time? How could it be that the Lord Jesus had not appeared to him?

Any dilemma this may have caused with John Robert was resolved on 9 SEP 62, while he was alone in the small cabin in Yucaipa. According to Stevens the Lord Himself appeared to him there and commissioned him in a new and exciting way for the End Time ministry.[7]

"It was a shattering experience," he said, taking him six months to regain his composure afterwards.[8] Unfortunately, before he was able to regain his composure – in fact, within a week following this special encounter, John Robert has a vision of his wife, Martha, in a coffin. After praying for the interpretation, it was revealed to him that for then on he was to regard his wife as being dead. In other words, his spiritual union with his wife in the eyes of the Lord had been annulled (death and adultery are the only two legitimate Biblical reasons for annulment). This freed John Robert, at least in the eyes of the Lord, to take on a "spiritual bride."[9]

This was no great shock to the intercessors of the Valley Church, still meeting in the home of the civil engineer. They all knew firsthand from John Robert that Martha had not been keeping up her end of the relationship. John Robert had been going through severe testing in the early Sixties and Martha had become more of a burden to him than a helpmeet. Thus, when John Robert and the engineer's wife declared to have a "spiritual" marriage, it only seemed appropriate that at least somebody was taking Martha's place. In fact, within two years following this vision, the intercessor's were praying for Martha's death, so that John Robert could be free in the eyes of men as well as the Lord.[10]

What? Praying for her death? But how could this be true? This new kind of prayer came about in the Walk as the result of an intense spiritual conflict that John Robert was undergoing, as the result of a new way of looking at things he received from a new member of the Valley Church. This new member had at one time allegedly been a member of a witchcraft coven.

The Nephilim

How did Stevens open himself up to such obvious deception? The answer lies in two other events that occurred between 1962 and 1965: the building of the Church of the Living Word in Sepulveda, and the increasing amount of occult teaching Stevens was not only learning but teaching as well. As ex-member Richard Bradley remarked in a letter to the SCP, after a few years away from the Walk because of school (he was the one who reported John Robert's infamous remark on the First Century Gnostics), he returned to the Walk in 1964:

I soon sensed that something had changed – I didn't sense my heart being drawn in simple love and worship to Jesus during the services as I had in prior years. I was also distressed by a failure to distinguish between valid gifts of the Holy Spirit and other manifestations, which had a distinct psychic flavor, such as the discernment and interpretation of "auras." One event is vividly etched on my memory: Stevens' enthusiastic endorsement of a new wave of interest in spiritual gifts, as spearheaded by a certain Mr. Ford, whose background in psychic circles was well known even at that time.[11]

The Mr. Ford was Arthur Ford, the famous psychic that led Bishop Pike down the primrose path to Spiritualism and a horrible death in the wilderness around the Dead Sea searching for the historical Jesus. Of course, with such prophets in his congregation like the woman that was into yoga, it's no wonder that no one was speaking out against obvious aberration. After all, the members of Grace Chapel were used – after ten years – to having accusations of Spiritualism hurled against them.

These new psychic revelations encouraged John Robert to take his message to the airwaves and in the same year he started teaching what he called "The School of Ministry" on the radio. His series on "Spiritual Warfare" was an instant success. However, it led eventually to a small split of four to five people from Grace Chapel in late 1964 or early 1965. The woman who led this split was none other than the prophesying yogini, her daughter, a schoolteacher, and her daughter's husband, a practicing chiropractor. This took place following a severe public reprimand by John Robert during a service after one of the woman's endless prophecies.[12] This affair was to have deep ramifications for Stevens in the spirit realm, for the psychic attacks that followed this incident were interpreted to have originated with this woman. Being spiritually naive in psychic warfare (even though he was teaching a series on spiritual warfare), John Robert needed help. He found it in a woman at the Valley Church.

The Valley Church was finished, built by the members themselves in Sepulveda, and dedicated on 31 MAY 65. In a letter by its new pastor, dated 24 MAY 65, everyone was invited to attend the grand opening of the large A-frame church at 8855 Haskell:

> The Church of the Living Word has been raised up by God in this day of Charismatic Renewal, and it will be dedicated to the restoration of New Testament truths . . . . Pastor Stevens will be ministering the word on "Restoration."[13]

The new pastor of the Church of the Living Word (the Valley Church), Harold Williams, was regarded in the Walk as the apostle to Brazil, for he had led a big revival for the Walk in Brazil and was highly venerated by all the members. Being the right hand man of John Robert made him the natural choice to be the pastor of the beautiful new church in Sepulveda. Stevens, of course, even though he was the head apostle, remained as pastor of Grace Chapel. However, the Valley church, being both near to John Robert's home in Burbank, and being near where the civil engineer's wife lived (her husband had become an elder in the Valley church), made the Church of the Living Word the virtual headquarters and showcase of the Walk.

It was here (Stevens ministered in both churches every Sunday) that John Robert encountered the practicing witch that led him into the dark secrets of witchcraft, knowledge that was necessary for him to combat the witchcraft being hurled against him by the yogini. From this woman, John Robert learned that the yogini was actually a Nephilim, a powerful agent of the Devil. The circumstances behind Stevens' encounter with this witch is bizarre, to say the least.

The Dualistic Personality

The practicing witch had attended Grace Chapel in the early Sixties in the person of her other half, that is, the other personality that co-habited her body. The personality that visited Grace Chapel was a Seventh Day Adventist, who came occasionally to hear John Robert preach (her sister attended Grace Chapel regularly) and to have him lay hands on her for personal directive prophecy.[14]

However, in 1965, her other half, the practicing witch began attending the Valley Church, and as a result, Stevens entered into a whole new realm of spiritual experience that gave him new teachings for the Walk. As the story goes, this woman was sent by her coven (either in the San Francisco Bay area or to the Chico, CA area) to seduce John Robert Stevens into the Old Religion because his ministry was creating such a disturbance in the Force – that is, Stevens's ministry was hindering the witches from practicing effective witchcraft because he was such a powerful force in the spirit realm, being, of course, the apostle of the Kingdom Age.

Stevens immediately latched onto this challenge and in one-on-one personal confrontations with this woman, converted her from witchcraft to the Walk (of course, in the future, it would seriously be questioned which one really succeeded in their natural mission). Soon after, during a retreat out at a natural hot springs in the desert, the woman with the split personality gave her testimony, how that she had been delivered out of witchcraft by John Robert and how that her personalities, now that they were both Christians, had been reintegrated as a result of his ministry.[15] What exactly his ministry entailed is not wholly known, but what is known of it is strange, to say the least. Once, while Stevens was ministering to this woman, one of his secretaries came into his office unexpectantly and found Stevens standing over the woman, who was sitting frozen as if in a trance in a chair. The secretary said, "Hi," to her but she did not reply. Stevens said, "She will not hear you because she is hypnotized."[16] The secretary was

frightened and soon left the room. Later, John Robert told her that he had performing a "deep probe" ministry, helping to reintegrate her personality through hypnosis. Of course, at the same time, he was probing her for knowledge of how to manipulate psychic energy.[17]

As a result of his success with the deep probe he suggested that all of the elders meet privately with him in his office so that he could minister this new healing method to them. In January 1966, Stevens told the elders:

> The probe's turning out to be one of the greatest ministries . . . . I think the probe is related to love, it has to be, because without love, something like this becomes very, very dangerous.[18]

At the same meeting, he told them he now knew the reason behind why the yogini at Grace Chapel had been seduced into witchcraft. It had been because she had learned too much during his "School of Ministry" without a proper amount of love and humility, for she had learned many things and had gained much knowledge of spiritual perception. But because of pride, she had "opened the door to witchcraft."[19] Stevens was warning the elders of the potential threat that the probe could cause them in the future if they were not careful:

> Now, to learn the theory of these things, remember whether you're going to walk in the truth of the thing or in the falseness of it. There's a certain basic structure for the psychic realm and the spirit realm, and you'll learn how to move in those things.[20]

Stevens, of course, had been progressively learning of this basic structure by continued deep probes of the ex-witch. In fact, he had learned enough a few months earlier, in November 1965, to begin teaching the elders on the power of witchcraft. As is hinted from the above quote, John Robert saw the psychic realm as basically neutral, that is, not the sole possession of Satan. In other words, the power was neutral. It depended on who used it for whatever purposes that determined whether it was good or evil. As a case in point, on 3 NOV 65, Stevens, after a lecture on the power of witchcraft, led the elders in a practical demonstration of it:

> I used to get that word, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" – it's out of the Scripture. And this is witchcraft . . . . I think we should pray for God to kill her, and quick. This thing has to be bound, it has to be the judgment of God.[21]

Stevens then led them in a prayer, or, to be more exact, a curse against the yogini, that God would judge her and not suffer her to live. This came as result of information that the ex-witch was feeding to Stevens. According to her, all of the spiritual warfare John Robert had been undergoing, especially with his wife, Martha, was the result of witchcraft from the yogini, getting revenge on Stevens for not allowing her to be his spiritual wife. Stevens had confirmed this through a method the elders "would not believe" (deep probe).[22] By March '66, Stevens was proud to announce to the elders, that their praying (cursing) had paid off. The yogini's power had been broken:

> Not too long ago, about a year ago, there was a woman who broke with us from the South Gate church. I think she is a bona fide false prophetess – at least she was. Her

> power was completely broken in December through much prayers and some fasting – but she proceeded to give me a bad time. A direct witness who had heard her say this, had heard her say what she was doing. She said, "I was raised up to lead Brother Stevens on in the truth. And when Brother Stevens rejected what I had to say, I proceeded to pray, because God is going to judge him."
>
> Now, God didn't judge me, but she still set up a lot of static. And when I finally sensed what she was doing, I proceeded to go before the throne of God and ask God to take care of it, and that was completely broken, and the line severed. That woman has no more influence or no power over me at all today.[23]

He then went on to assure them that his work with the ex-witch was moving along very nicely, even though she still feared demons, especially the ones that were trying to kill Stevens. In fact, earlier that day she had warned Stevens not to drive because the demons were trying to kill him. Stevens (who was in the middle of a 48-hour prayer and fasting time), however, was not afraid, having already tasted the recent victory over the yogini.[24]

The victory must have been very sweet, for soon after he went to the intercessors and, after placing a curse on Martha, his wife, he told them that they must start praying for her death. She had not stood up to the spiritual warfare of his duel with the yogini (in fact, the yogini had used her spirit to attack John Robert), and in the process, had become devil-possessed – had become a Nephilim. Therefore, it was their duty to fulfill the judgment of the Scripture and pass God's judgment on her. Of course, there were other more pressing reasons for why this judgment should be executed: John Robert's spiritual marriage with the elder's wife was to become more physical. John Robert was positive that he had the word from the Lord that this woman was to become his real wife.[25] Of course, in order for this to take place, both Martha and the woman's husband would have to die. By this time, however, something sounding as bizarre as all of this did not so much as stir the slightest mention that maybe something was not all correct in the teachings of John Robert. How could this have occurred, especially in so short of a time? The answer lies both in the secret doctrines Stevens began to teach the elders and intercessors, as well as the conscience-searing process that takes place as the result of both receiving and practicing these secret doctrines.

Notes:

1. Robert Bradley, taped interview with SCP (10 JUN 77).

2. Private interview with ex-Walk member, 1954-1966, who wishes to remain anonymous for personal reasons, and Woodrow Nichols (23 NOV 79). Transcript on file at SCP.

3. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (3 NOV 65).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Private tape of ex-Walk intercessor and secretary, 1962-1967, who wishes to remain anonymous for personal reasons (8 May 67).

7. Private interview with ex-Walk intercessor, op. cit., and SCP (9 JUN 77); and Bradley, op. cit.

8. Bradley, Ibid.

9. Earl M. Leasure (ex-Walk elder, 1956-1967), private interview with SCP (12 JUN 77).

10. Ibid.

11. Robert Bradley, private letter to SCP (1 APR 77).

12. Ex-Walk member, op. cit.

13. Harold E. Williams, public letter to Walk members (24 MAY 65).

14. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church service (22 APR 67).

15. Ex-Walk member, op. cit., This incident occurred at the time when **The Three Faces of Eve** was at the height of its popularity (the story of a woman with three personalities).

16. Ex-Walk intercessor, op. cit.

17. Ibid.

18. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (3 JAN 66).

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (3 NOV 65). Stevens had said earlier in this tape:

> As these ministries come up [the restored ministries of the End Time in the Walk], [yogini's name omitted] is raised up by the Devil – she has the power; she is a full-fledged witch.
>
> John Robert had been able to verify this knowledge (received through the ex-witch) through books on the power and science of witchcraft and the witchcraft revival that the ex-witch had procured for him in local bookstores, especially occult bookstores in Pasadena.

22. Ibid.

23. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (27 MAR 66).

24. 24 John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church service (27 MAR 66).

25. Ex-Walk intercessor, (8 MAY 67), op. cit.

Chapter Eight:

The Secret Doctrine

Spiritual Perception

As mentioned earlier, John Robert had been suffering intense spiritual attack in the early Sixties. With the aid of the ex-witch's knowledge, he was able to fight off and defeat most of the forces coming against him. Now that he had learned a definite technique he felt it was his duty, as the apostle of the Kingdom Age, to pass it on to the faithful. Through providential circumstances, the SCP has come into the possession of taped recordings of elders meetings during this time. From January 1966 to February 1967, Stevens taught his elders some of the most bizarre teachings that have ever gone under the name of Christian wisdom in history.

In the last chapter, we encountered John Robert introducing the ex-witch's teachings on the power and science of witchcraft at the elder's meeting at the Valley Church, praying for the death of the yogini. On 8 JAN 66, he introduced a program to the elders that he thought would enable them to develop their spiritual perception so that they could move fully into the restored ministries of the Kingdom. They should each start a notebook and check on the following items of the duties and responsibilities of ministry: they were to be led by the Spirit; they were to make sure they had a pure word from God; and for spiritual perception they were to get rid of any inadequacy and fear in their lives so that they could have more boldness for "moving out" in ministry. They had to learn to give out and how to wait on the Lord. They had to learn to minister to those not in the Walk so that they might lead them into the true fold. They would have to learn how to use the "probe" so that they could remove the deep blocks in those they ministered to; to learn how to have victory over the material realm, to know their duties, to come into an effective prayer life – to learn how to walk in the here and now, and how to find the job for today and to do it, and to know how to do it.[1]

Then he laid out the seven areas of primary concern that they all had to face immediately:

1. the development of spiritual perception;
2. prayer together on Saturday mornings;
3. learn how to use the "deep probe" in the Spirit:

> The probe's turning out to be one of the greatest ministries . . . . I think the probe is related to love – it has to be. Because without love, something like this becomes very, very dangerous;

4. learn how to develop a personal ministry to yourself;
5. each elder should find his "present expression";
6. there was a great need for simple instruction in public speaking -- for the ability to know how to think and move in Spirit on their feet;
7. and how to develop a congregational ministry.[2]

However, before they could even begin they would have to learn how to build walls of protection against spirit attack, how to eliminate the clash between two people's spirits, and how to keep from getting "bombed," that is, learning how to protect oneself from getting "tuned-into" by someone else [i.e., being influenced by the thoughts and attitudes of others]:

> There's so much in this realm of the spirit that can be a spooky hard thing to get along with, or, with a few simple instructions it can be the most practical thing in the world. We learn how to live in God, with protection to us, and not projecting anything either in the spirit that's going to be harmful, coming out of our human spirit. If we go through God we can minister in God.[3]

On 19 FEB 66, he taught the elders some of the basics of how to develop spiritual perception. He explained to them that the human spirit works on the "unconscious level," because the "conscious" mind is carnal and it needs to be renewed. The idea is to develop your consciousness so that it is at the same level that it is when one is between sleep and wakefulness, for it is here that the ability of the unconscious is at the strongest for "projection" – the ability to get your spirit somewhere else other than where you are for communication:

> It's the most powerful time also, right between wakefulness and sleep because at that time both the conscious and the unconscious mind are in unity. You could call it a "self-hypnotic state" and you'd be true because there are many levels of self-hypnosis. But you are actually in a state of self-suggestion right at that moment, between sleep and wakefulness.[4]

The question was then raised on how one filters out suggestions that come from God from other spiritual suggestions? Stevens answered that it depended on the way "you live in your spiritual dedication and in spiritual conflict, otherwise you will get jumbled signals, especially if you try to use the conscious mind in this – then you mix the flow."[5] As a good example of this ability, Stevens cited the life of William Branham:

> Branham was much more of a mystic than he let on. A mystic does not reason things through from the conscious level, it comes up from the unconscious level.[6]

In a really strange about face, he then told them that the only way to truly pick up anything from the Holy Spirit was through the psychic realm: "That's why I say this thing is not Pentecostal. People don't move in revelation in what is really pure Pentecost: they can jump, they can talk in tongues, but they do not have any deep perception."[7] To Stevens, only the psychic realm was real. Therefore, since the Pentecostals only move in the realm of the "soulish", "you can't be any further from it when you're in Pentecost."[8] In fact, to sum it all up, he told them: "You can actually have the Holy Spirit and no spiritual perception at all if you don't follow what I'm trying to say."[9]

Only the new revelations of the apostle of the Kingdom Age would give the believer the necessary spiritual perception to meet the challenge and the warfare of the coming new age. Outside of John Robert Stevens and the Walk there was only the spiritual deadness of the Old Order, including the Latter Rain Movement.

Only by praying in the half-sleep/half-awake state could one be guaranteed of having a true revelation. The idea was to develop this state so that one would be able to get "into the spirit" at will. Diet was essential for the proper development of spiritual perception. Large meals and carbohydrates cut off spiritual perception, but calcium and B6 were very good. It was at this meeting that Stevens revealed another great new influence on his spiritual understanding: Emanuel Swedenborg, regarded by most scholars as the father of Spiritualism:

> Another great mystic was Swedenborg. You may not approve of his writings at all, which I don't, but you have to understand that he opened the door to Spiritualism and so forth . . . . He was a fantastic guy. I have quite a few of his writings and I have enjoyed reading some of his life story . . . . Swedenborg himself had developed this psychic ability so much, even before, he claims the spirit realm opened up to him, and it is possible that he became deranged so that the thing wasn't working properly . . . . His clairvoyant abilities were just unequaled . . . . He had such clairvoyant abilities – he developed them.[10]

In other words, the ability can be developed by anyone. Swedenborg, being deranged, obviously came to some wrong conclusions. But just think of this ability in the hands of the servants of God? What a possibility! The elders agreed and submitted to Stevens to be led into the demonic realm of the psychic/occultic reality of the forbidden fruit. His first lesson was in yoga breathing:

> Almost everything that deals with mysticism brings up the problem of breathing, and the Lord keeps speaking about it, you know – "the breath of the Spirit" – so forth. And you wonder why – why does He talk about this? [He then instructs them in breathing lessons so that they can loosen tensions and develop spiritual perception] . . . . Breathe in deeply, tune your mind, especially think right from the center of your forehead. Think on the Lord, draw . . . . Did you feel the anointing?[11]

By now, of course, they were ready for some of the harder stuff. On l2 MAR 66, he taught them how to focus on their third eye, the pituitary gland, center of spiritual perception, teaching them so that they might be consciously aware, so that they "could see spiritually."[12] He gave credit to the ex-witch for this teaching, for she had developed her third eye to a very high degree. "One of the things that has impressed me so much," he said, " is [woman's name is omitted]'s wisdom."[13]

Of course, if John Robert had no overall Biblical base from which to pull this mumbo-jumbo of Eastern Mysticism and occult philosophy, he might not have been able to convince these naive elders. But he had a very persuasive argument that, if one did not think about it too much, was both simple and convincing. For want of a better word, we will refer to it as the "residual theory."

The Residual Theory

The primary aspect of the residual theory is that before the Fall, Adam possessed tremendous spiritual/psychic powers that he either totally lost or were suppressed by guilt as the result of his disobedience in the Garden. This theory, perhaps, is the main channel of deception that has allowed Bible believing Christians (we should never forget that the majority of those in the Walk

are Bible believing Christians) to be sucked into Eastern Mysticism, occult philosophy, and psychic phenomena (PSI). As Stevens put it to the elders:

> And these things that exist within us [psychic abilities], without turning to mysticism whatsoever, we can develop by the Holy Spirit – faculties that are there. Adam probably had them and lost them in the Fall. Through demon power a few have re-cultivated them – but how much more could a Christian cultivate these things?[14]

It is important at this time to make perfectly clear that psychic phenomena has never been Biblically proved to be a neutral or human ability that can be developed by either Christians or pagans, to be used for either good (i.e., for God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit) or for evil (i.e., for Satan, through the agency of demon power). Neither medical science nor the Scriptures have revealed where the fine line between the unconscious and the conscious is, or where the fine line between human consciousness and demon consciousness is, thus, making the whole area a shady gray area of unknown quantity at best. If anything, the Scriptures themselves, realizing the nature of this problem, has forbidden the believer to have anything to do at all with any of it. Even the Scripture in Hebrews 4:12, about the Scriptures being able to divide the soul from spirit is by no means a blank check for psychic involvement, for it in no way contradicts any of the clear Biblical prohibitions against it (e.g., Deuteronomy 18: 9-14).

After giving the elders the theoretical basis of psychic involvement, he then went on and taught them more about proper yoga breathing:

> First of all, the greatest deterrent to spiritual perception, or waiting on the Lord, is our lack of concentration. We cannot focus on one thing and maintain it for any period of time. And one of the things that will help you in this, is the fact that concentration can be controlled by the rate of your breathing. Your mind can be completely controlled by the rapidity or the slowness with which you breathe . . . . Revelation comes easier if you breathe properly . . . . That's why one of the first things that a yogi will teach you is breathing, and almost all of their exercises are designed toward the flow of blood, to be regulated through the body and the internal organs, but is based upon breathing, if you remember. Everything is based on breathing! The yogis who master the art of meditation and come into deep spiritual experience, which I grant you, most all of them are demonic – although it's interesting, that several Catholic priests and some Protestant ministers have been writing books on Christian yoga, trying to eliminate everything that is pagan or heathen in it and come down to the basic principles. [He then leads them in some breathing exercises, having established in the elder's minds enough evidence to convince them that whether or not the Catholic priests or Protestant ministers have come down to the basic principles, totally purged of any pagan elements, at least the apostle of the Kingdom Age has done so] . . . . So, anything that is going to help us enter real worship, we ought to buy it, or at least try it for ourselves and see if it's going to work for us.[15]

And thus, in his own words, John Robert has summed up the chief error of the Walk: experiment with anything to see if it works. The danger here, of course, is that yoga is the best demonic system ever devised on earth for plugging a person into direct spirit communication,

otherwise known as spiritism. All systems, whether they are magical, religious, or occult based, use the basic principles of yoga because of this very reason: they work!

A woman who knew John Robert very well at this time lends verification to the statement Stevens made above about being willing to try anything. According to her, Stevens said that he was willing to use even witchcraft (it must be remembered that he viewed witchcraft as a neutral "force" to be either used for good or for evil) to further his ministry, especially if he could be like Paul the apostle, that is, to be able to leave his body at will and travel in spirit like he believed Paul did in II Corinthians 12:1-4.[16]

Of course, not only was John Robert willing to use witchcraft himself, he was also willing to teach its principles to the elders. This is made apparent in the elders meeting of 27 MAR 66, where he taught them the theoretical basis of cursing or blessing with the power of the tongue, that is, he taught them how to "create a force" through the spoken word of power.

He began with the teaching that the human body is the temple of the spirit, which is both an amplifier and a broadcaster; that is, it can tune-in to another's spirit and can also transmit to another spirit. In other words, he is talking about telepathy: thought transference (or, in his words, spirit transference). Thus, one can influence the actions, thoughts, and behavior of others by tuning in and broadcasting. Of course, this also works in reverse: others can do the same to you. It is the duty of the elder to be able to distinguish when he is receiving messages, thoughts, or impulses from the Holy Spirit or from another person's spirit. He then went on to tell them, "The audible word is the channel, or the carrier, of the human spirit."[17] This is important for them to grasp, for even prayers that are not heard by God still have an effect on the spiritual plane:

> Prayers that may be wrong and completely unanswered by God are still a force just to the human spirit that utters them and sends them forth. First time I came across this, was a number of years – do you remember how the people used to pray down in South Gate? We had a section of people that began to really pray against me [led by the yogini]. I went through hell. I can't describe what I went through. And it just opened the door to many things that came to harass me. And I began to wonder about that, because I knew these people were not right. And eventually every one of them came under the judgment of God.
>
> But what gave their prayers such a power? The audible word is the channel, or the carrier, of the human spirit! And even when people are wrong they can pray an audible prayer – and it's a force against the person they're praying against. You may doubt this, but it's still true. It's very true . . . . Life and death are in the power of the tongue.[18]

And not only the audible word is a force to be reckoned with, but "your attitude or spirit may be setting up a force of influence."[19] The truly unfortunate thing about this interpretation is that, whatever the real reasons behind the split with the yogini (it was never known what the genuine causes may have been), Stevens now had an easy excuse and to him, a legitimate reason for *anyone* who disagreed with him: it was witchcraft from the enemy. Even if the Holy Spirit chose to attempt to correct him, he would interpret it as satanic assault, for he knew he was right and

whatever came against him must, therefore, be wrong. This is, of course, the heart and soul of self-deception. John Robert was not the first to succumb to it, but this type of 1984 "double-think" mentality is at the crux of the Walk's spiritual elitism and is one of the main characteristics of all cults.

The very same day, Stevens prepared the congregation for the future teachings on the secret doctrine by his message to "Come into the greatness of Dispensational fullness reserved for this hour for the Church of Jesus Christ."[20] Two months later, in the home of the one of the elders in La Mirada, Stevens began to teach them the "signs" felt physically as part of the Dispensational fulness. It was, more than anything else, a symbolic tour of Scripture, showing the elders that there was a Biblical base for such things. For example, he taught them that the right hand has spiritual force in it and that the ball of the thumb represents judgment and authority. Therefore, when one feels a burning or pulsation in these places, one knows the spiritual significance, or interpretation, of what is happening.

It was also discussed at this meeting the idea of setting up a non-profit corporation for the purpose of printing books and distributing tapes of the *rhema* of John Robert Stevens. This was eventually done under the name Living Word, Inc. The elders also agreed with Stevens that once a book or tape was purchased it should be kept strictly in the hands of those in the Walk, in fact, the member should make "a covenant with God not to disclose what is in the book to anyone else – like in a secret society."[21] This shows that John Robert was fully aware that if word got out in the normal Christian world of what he was teaching, there would be a mild uproar at least. Thus, like all things done in the dark (i.e., evil), John Robert knew that the true doctrines of the Walk must be kept secret and only revealed to those who had a revelation for the Walk. This is why these teachings are not in the *First Principles* or most of their publications for public consumption. However, in the years to come they would be made freely available to anyone in the Walk in a course of classes known as the **"School of the Prophets."**

Focusing the Force

It was at this time that John Robert began teaching the elders how to focus their psychic energy to help him combat the hostile forces coming against him (which may have included the interference of the Holy Spirit trying to get him to repent and turn back to God):

> I have been growing specifically in spiritual authority during the last year. I think most of you brothers are aware of that. And the ministry has constantly exposed me to a deeper level of satanic assault . . . . [The Maui pagans] know how to focus a great deal of force. And brothers, that's one thing we're going to have to really learn, is how that the force that God has given us can be exercised in the realm of spirit, so that we don't dissipate, and we don't lose the force.[22]

This is, of course, standard theory in nature worship, commonly known as witchcraft. Stevens was teaching the "force" over ten years before it was popularized in the motion picture *Star Wars*. Stevens then went on to discuss the nature of spiritual assault, especially in "devil triads":

> For instance, why would certain things come against me? Actually, I wasted three years in spiritual battle and I couldn't get my feet on the ground, couldn't learn why. Because when things would happen I would respond emotionally and I would see only the first source coming at me. I would not stop to think that this could be a channel of the other forces working. The effectiveness was finally found when we saw a certain deliverance come [the ex-witch], and then, afterwards, was the revelation of a triad. There were three devil-possessed, free spirits [i.e., able to astral project, or travel out of the body], that were using this channel [the yogini], and I was venting all my emotion being stirred on the channel. And every time God would start to deal with the thing – this probably sounds like hodge-podge to you, but it isn't, it's exactly the truth – every time God would start to deal with the things, I'd pray, "O God, you deal with this thing, and loose the situation!" Then the devils would know what button to push to bring something against me, and I would respond subjectively . . . . One has to respond objectively to demon activity from the demon order – no longer responding personally, subjectively.[23]

In order for them to respond objectively against the demon realm they must learn how to focus their energy. First he told them that their spirit can draw from the Lord if they raised their hands up over their heads:

> You are in tune with the Lord. If you are conscious of this you can generate a charge in your hands – the divine virtue. The only purpose of laying-on hands is to give them something . . . . It's meaningless unless there's something you actually do in it.[24]

In essence, focusing was drawing from the Lord with raised hands, making contact with the Holy Spirit within, and then making physical contact (through the laying on of hands) with another person without. The following month, he taught them the difference between the scientific and the religious spirit: the two extremes of unbelief (i.e., unbelief of his teachings). The scientific spirit, either human or demonic, was orderly, methodical, and deeply analytical, therefore unable to grasp the high level of spiritual revelation that John Robert was teaching. The other was the religious (not to be confused with spiritual) spirit: the self-righteous, hypocritical spirit, satisfied that the "soulish" realm was the true reality of God's moving.[25]

By November, the elders were ready to begin the seven phases of anointed ministry. On 5 NOV 66, Stevens laid out these seven phases as:

1. they had to have a personal witness, that is, a right spirit;
2. there was a need for them in visitation, that is, comforting their flock;
3. there was a need for teaching, exhortation, and preaching – the oral ministries (the functions of the gift of prophecy in I Corinthians 14:3);
4. a need for healing and deliverance;
5. a need for counseling, guided by wisdom and revelation;
6. a need for intercession, guided by faith (works-believism) power and revelation;
7. and, last but not least, the need for an aggressive spiritual warfare.[26]

For example, as a result of revelation and aggressive warfare, a devil triad at South Gate had been busted up a few weeks earlier. It had been discovered that three scientific spirits had been operating through an Eskimo boy in the church, led by the great Nephilim scientific spirit, Ahiman. The boy was prayed over and the hindrance was loosed – the triad was busted up (the name of the Nephilim was revealed to Stevens through the Spirit during the service – it is the name of one of the sons of Anak, a giant who dwelt in Hebron, recorded in Numbers 13:22; Joshua 15:14; and Judges 1:10).[27] The doctrines of Nephilims and triads would become a big part of the Walk of the Seventies. It had its beginning right here in a service in Grace Chapel of South Gate in September 1966.

The Probe

During this meeting Stevens also revealed that a deep spiritual bond had been created between him and Harold Williams (the apostle to Brazil, the pastor of the Valley Church) as a result of the "deep probe." The "probe" was proving to be tremendously successful in loosing William's spirit, making it free. As a result of the bond between him and Stevens, they both could be with each other in spirit no matter where they were in body. According to Stevens, this is what the apostle meant when he told the churches that he was with them in spirit: "Paul was a very free spirit, able to be with another church in spirit though absent in flesh."[28] Stevens would later define "free spirit" in his 1970 edition of the *First Principles* as:

> FREE SPIRIT: A free spirit is another term that has come into use. Many people are born with free spirits; others become free as they walk with the Lord. With a free spirit, part of a person's spirit can be with him and part of his spirit can be ministering to others. The spirit can minister almost as realistically as if the person himself were standing in the flesh and ministering.[29]

Creating bonds, free spirits, and making it possible for the elders to move in "direct revelation" (i.e., the conscious mind linked up to the human spirit) was the whole purpose of their ministry.[30] Stevens went on to suggest that the elders gather a select group of people from the church and set up a school of ministry. However, in a few areas of what he had been teaching the elders should "pull the punches" on his methods and just stick to the Scriptures:

> You can see the wisdom of this, can't you? Many of your people are not dedicated, they're not prepared to receive the rest of it, but they could receive enough that we could help them into a right spirit: the preparation for future things. But you're the ones who should have the "probing" down deep into your own spirit. I would like to see this, I would like to see you take advantage of this ministry of the "probe." Now, with being able to read the spirit more fully, I think that some of you could come up with the depth of the "probe" that we didn't know before, and let it ride here for about a year and a half.[31]

In other words, the use of the "probe" was to be the exclusive tool of Stevens and the elders. He was encouraging them to come and make appointments with him for personal ministry. In other words, he was asking them to come to his office so that he could hypnotize them, to help them overcome their inhibitions, and to put them more fully under his control and authority and

power. The teaching of the "probe" would not be released to the rest of the church (i.e., the elders would not be using it on the flock) for at least a year and a half. Stevens first had to prepare the congregations with the foundation for his new teachings. In the meantime, he would spend his time creating the apostolic company of the End Time: mighty psychic samarai (or Jedi Knights) in spiritual warfare.

One week later, at a joint Valley Church-Grace Chapel elders meeting in South Gate, Stevens told them that with the "probe" he was able to minister directly to a person's spirit without having to go through their conscious mind. Since, as he told them, over one third of all illness originates in the mind, emotions, or spirit, the only way one can really reach them is in the subconscious mind – that is, directly to the spirit (equating the spirit with the subconscious mind):

> Why not open the spirit up [with the "probe"] and minister healing, minister down to the level of the spirit in cases if you can discern to do this, so that the healing flows to the body from the spirit and you deal with the things . . . .To reach the unconscious mind and all of its attitudes, because it is something, in many instances – almost apart of from the spirit – is most closely connected with your spirit . . . . But there's still some attitudes that you have to get at, at an unconscious level and, of course, the "probes" have had a lot to do with that.[32]

It must have seemed that at last John Robert had found the key that he had been seeking: the key to unlock the higher realms of revelation. With all of his elders gathered in one place it must have seemed apparent to him that the dawning of the restoration of all things was at hand, that the Walk was almost ready to move this world from one age into the next. It must have seemed this way because during this meeting, John Robert's enthusiasm was overflowing as he mapped out his bold vision to the elders:

> If we can get a bunch of elders and ministers here who really knew what they were doing, boy, we could find this list of men that God has His hand on to bring forth as part of the great Apostolic Company of apostles and prophets: the men of God . . . . and we could get to them and we can say, "They're [the devils] after you! This is what is coming against you, and this is what we can help you to do, that you learn how to meet the battle!" . . . . God has His men that are not bound to Satan. God has men that He is bringing up, and the Devil's eye is upon every one of them, and his strategy is set to try to defeat. We can beat it! "Greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world!" That's what's keeping those men going now, but how much more would they do if they had eyes to see and they had their forces focused, and they had men praying with them, and they knew how to meet the battle – and believe me, I'm telling the truth. This is no fairy tale![33]

If the elders hadn't quite gotten the vision by the beginning of 1967 it was too late, because at the start of the year he began teaching the congregation the "signs" ministry. It was time to move out and meet the battle.

The Signs of the Quickening of the Mortal Flesh

John Robert began his sermon at the Valley Church by telling the congregation, "I prophesy almost entirely by vision."[34] What he meant was that his ministry was a "Seer-Prophet" type of ministry, that is, his subconscious was directly tuned to the Spirit of God. He then went on to teach that there would be eight signs that would signify the full coming of the restoration:

1. symptom signs, that is, the ones where a person identifies with the pain or illness of someone else, feeling the same pain;
2. assault signs, that is, physical signs that indicate spiritual attack;
3. impartation signs – a burning in the hands;
4. ministering signs – similar to #3;
5. devil signs – where one feels and senses the presence of devil or satanic powers;
6. angel signs – where one senses or feels the presence of angels;
7. divine presence signs – where one feels the "shekina" glory;
8. restoration signs – indications of growing pains, like burning eyes or extreme body sensitivity.[35]

These signs were coming, he assured them, because of the dispensations, that is, the way that God has dealt with man during periods or epochs of salvation history. He then went on to give them a background in traditional American metaphysical residual theory: "At the Fall Adam died to divine awareness – to his spiritual faculties. His body was dead to the Spirit of God."[36] This, of course, is changed with salvation. However, only the spirit of man is made alive at salvation, according to Romans 8:10: the body is dead because of sin. However, in one of the most bizarre twistings of Scripture in Christian history, Stevens interprets Romans 8:11 to back up the extreme Latter Rain position that the "manifestation of the Sons of God" will entail appropriating the resurrection body – the body of redemption – this side of the First Resurrection. To Stevens, the presence of the eight signs coming forth was proof that this was already happening. In another sermon elaborating on this same point (i.e., Romans 8: 11: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you"), Stevens proclaimed that this Scripture did not refer to the resurrection from the dead (the First Resurrection) but to the restoration manifestation. He made it clear that this verse was referring to two distinct Spirits:

> The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are two different things here: they flow in one but there's a distinction . . . . The growth of spiritual perception is the quickening of your mortal body . . . . coming into the mind of Christ. What's really happening is that the Lord is quickening the mortal body; it's beginning to come alive. We have been groaning in our spirit, waiting for it, and now comes the redemption of our body: our body is coming alive to God. Now if Christ is in you, your spirit is alive; but if the spirit that raised up Jesus dwells within you, then you're quick in your mortal body. That's what's taking place. And it opens up in a number of different signs that you get in your physical body.[37]

In other words, what Adam lost in his body (i.e., his psychic abilities) because of the Fall, the believer gets them back, not at salvation when Christ only makes his spirit alive, not during the

First Resurrection, but now – just as soon as one learns how to develop his spiritual perception, that is, the sign that Spirit of the Father (to be distinguished from the Spirit of Christ) quickens the mortal flesh, when He makes the body alive to Himself once again, as it was before the Fall. What this means is that when one is quickened by the Father, then his identity is absorbed into that of the Father's and he becomes divine. Thus, attaining spiritual perception is not just attaining one's redemption body, it is attaining godhood. So, to sum up, according to Stevens, one received the Spirit of Christ at rebirth (salvation) and the Spirit of the Father at the quickening of his mortal flesh (at the attainment of spiritual perception). The reason why this did not happen in the past was because of the dispensations. God was saving this for the End Time:

> This day of miracles, this great period of miracles before us is going to occur because people are going to break through – they will break through to this "manifestation" of the Father in us [i.e., appropriate the divine nature: godhood] that brings the quickening of the mortal body.[38]

Just to make everything perfectly clear, he elaborates even further in another sermon:

> God has given us a divine nature in the Second Adam....These things are not anything that are spooky, and I'm not trying to teach you anything of the occult or the metaphysical. I am talking to you about what happens through the Holy Spirit, through God's anointing that's coming upon us as the children of God. And you must make a distinction because only psychic ability that is developed outside of Jesus Christ is not developed in people who have a born again spirit: a renewed spirit in God. It's another thing – it's an activity of soul that is not to be compared with the divine nature and an awareness that God is bringing forth in the people of the Lord. Right? That's right! Amen.[39]

And in another sermon:

> This is the end of an age and it's the beginning of another one. It's a transition period. And these signs and so forth are coming. You can't go in the Bible and find that these were the things they did in the New Testament. It doesn't say. If they did, it doesn't say it. Because it remains for the End Time for it to come out as an open revelation . . . . You're in another period. And while everything in the blood of Jesus Christ, the foundation of the Church, remains, there is an injection of certain other things, which indicate Romans 8 is coming to pass . . . . Now, you read that carefully! If Christ is in you, then the spirit is alive because of righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. Christ can be in you and your body is still to dead to God; but your spirit is alive to God. Consequently, all the five senses are dead to God. You don't see Him, smell Him, hear Him; you don't taste Him, not of those things, though you may be in Christ.
>
> When Christ is in you, your spirit is alive because of righteousness but the body is dead because of sin. "But if the Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, it will also quicken your mortal bodies" – by His Spirit that dwells in you. This means that God the Father is the one that is injecting His Spirit into the people that the various senses are coming alive to God [i.e., the psychic senses] . . . . You can feel

> things in your hands, your body is coming alive. It's the beginning of immortal bodies [i.e., the residual restoration: the "manifestation"].[40]

This whole thing about the residual restoration and the quickening of the mortal bodies is essential to understand for it is what the Walk is all about: it is its sole reason for existence. It is the whole purpose behind the calling of John Robert Stevens to be the apostle of the Kingdom Age: the one who would reveal the secret mind of God according to the dispensations:

> The whole purpose of this Walk is that the foundational ministries will break the door down and open the door for this quickening of the mortal bodies, to finish this course and then we'll have the "manifestation of the Sons of God" coming forth in rapid rapidity.[41]

After the teaching on the signs and the quickening of the mortal bodies, Stevens then taught on auras, recommending the classic work on the subject by Dr. Kilner. He told them that there were three different auras around the human body, signifying what condition your spirit was in. This was because everything you have done is written in your spirit. He later defined "aura" in the fourth edition of the *First Principles* as thus:

> AURA: What we are in our physical body is not apart from what we are in our spirits.
>
> The aura is the glow or radiation round about a person and is composed of several layers, each of which represents something different about the individual's nature. The spectrum of the aura exists in a range of color vibrations that are related to the ultra-violet rays. Auras reveal things that are wrong or things affecting us. When we talk about an individual's aura, we are talking about that which reflects his spiritual condition as well as his physical condition.[42]

As can be clearly seen, he stuck to the classic occult definition, but by this time it should come as no surprise. At the end of the service, he queried the congregation on whether or not they were interested in learning more about signs and interpretations. This was, of course, his way of testing to see if they were ready for the hardcore teachings he had been giving to the elders for over a year. The congregation responded enthusiastically that they wanted to hear everything he knew on this subject. From this time on, the true modern Walk of John Robert Stevens began. It is true that he had shared many of these things before, earlier, at Grace Chapel of South Gate (with the consequence of a minor split with the yogini), but the Valley Church would always be the center of hardcore occultism from this moment on.

It was also revealed at this service that Stevens had always wanted to write a book titled, "Signs, Symbols, and Signals," but was afraid of putting something like this in writing because of possible misunderstandings in the Christian community (as well as giving them evidence to back up their charges of his overt Spiritualism):

> The trouble is, the minute that something like that's committed to writing, the critics have a lot of weapons against you that they wouldn't cease to use. So I'm thinking that this information should be passed on to the faithful, who would use it and not leave

> anything that could be used against you. Maybe I'm wrong. I know in ancient times, when there were great secrets came forth, none of the old teachers committed to writing them but they passed it on to faithful men who would teach others also.[43]

It was a sad thing for John Robert Stevens that he lived in such a modern age. For he made the same terrible tragic mistake that President Richard M. Nixon made during Watergate: he didn't write it down, but he had everything recorded on tape. If the secret doctrine of John Robert Stevens and the Walk was secret up until now, it is now out in the open and exposed for exactly what it is: the quickening of the mortal flesh is none other than a spiritual technique common to all occult societies that seek to gain spiritual power through spirit contact. That Stevens was not unaware of this is made clear by his teaching on "transference."

Transference

Transference is the word Stevens came up with to describe the direct manipulation of psychic power that he was teaching to the congregations in the Walk, learned primarily from the ex-witch and the books she procured for him. Stevens, having a tremendous knack for finding Scriptural justification for almost anything, brilliantly tied this occult practice to the Biblical principle of the transference of sin, as in the Old Testament example of transferring a person's sin by laying his hand on a sacrificial animal who then bore the sin to the just penalty: death; and the New Testament principle of Christ becoming sin so that we might become the righteousness of God – II Corinthians 5:21 (of course, Stevens also uses this verse to prove that us becoming His righteousness means us becoming God):

We cannot have impartation without something that is transferred from one person to another. We can't have deliverance unless something is taken from a person and the Lord becomes a burden-bearer to take it away. We can't have anything unless there is a transference . . . . The thing of transference is the whole basis of the gospel – Isaiah 53:4-6.[44]

The primary method for this transference was through the laying-on of hands: "I'm constantly making bonds between my spirit and every man I lay my hands on";[45] as well as drawing force and energy and power and anointing from God so that one may pass it on in the spirit realm (through a "free spirit"):

> Can one person take from another? Yes. And I have found some of this vampirism, which I don't like in the spirit realm. I've seen people who have no walk with God at all, and they sustain themselves completely by the fact that they know how to draw on other people. And that's not a healthy thing . . . . You see, this thing of transference and everything really works in an evil way as well as a good way. You have to learn how that the force and power and anointing that God gives you should not be dissipated in a way that is bad, and it should be used to support the weak and to help one another.[46]

What is going on here is the instruction in white magic, that the force of witchcraft, that is, transference, is a neutral thing that, if drawn from God and not demons, and used only for good,

is what the End Time restoration is all about. If there is still any doubt that this is true, the following quote should dissolve any questions:

> If we could see what fear does – fear leaves the aura open . . . . Transference can easily take place where there is fear [because of gaps in the aura]. But if you have faith [i.e., works-believism] it is very difficult to transfer anything to you that's of a wrong nature. But the positive things can be transferred quite readily if you have faith . . . . The aura reaches out, it embraces the positive thing that is coming and incorporates it into itself.[47]

Of course, Stevens makes it very clear to his congregation that if they doubt the truth to this doctrine, then they are doubting the very essence of Christianity itself:

> You know what's been happening here tonight? We've had a mingling of the old orthodox, because you can't say, "Well, now, this wasn't Scriptural, this wasn't Christian." How Christian can you get? "The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all." What else is there in the gospel?. . . .You say, "Well, it's just too spooky." Too spooky that the strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak? What do you want in a church?[48]

In another tape Stevens taught that the principle of transference is a necessary tool to get rid of the Nephilim "leaven" before the Feast of Passover. That is, the real threat to the congregation wasn't from outside the congregation, it was from within – that is, Satan working devil triads through weak members who had weak auras:

> Transference is probably the most deadly weapon that Satan has. That's why in the End Time witchcraft comes up as a very predominant manifestation of Satan. Witchcraft becomes more important than it has been for all the centuries of the Christian Church. You never did have witchcraft on the large scale that you have now. Witchcraft is based upon the principles of transference: to take one thing and move it to another. Now that cannot work. . . .witchcraft cannot work where the devil-possessed person on the outside of the church tries to "hit" a godly person on the inside. . . .The enemy does not succeed with witchcraft with that which is outside the Walk, but always they use to focus through a point of contact someone who is in the Walk, in order to reach the Walk. . . .If there is a triad, there will always be one of them that's in the body.[49]

In other words, Satan must be able to transfer his evil influence through someone in the Walk or go down in defeat. The way he can do this is to weaken certain members by "hitting" them. Stevens defines "being hit" in the *First Principles*:

> BEING HIT: When one comes into a walk in the spirit he becomes aware that there are spirits other than the Holy Spirit. They may be manifested by headaches, pains, etc., all of which are allowed by God to teach warfare in the spirit. When you are "hit" it means you are sensitive physically and emotionally to the realm of spirit.

> God allows us to be hit because He is teaching us a type of warfare. We must become sensitive to the Spirit so we will not be ignorant and will know what the devil is doing and know also what God is doing. We submit to God and resist the devil and he will flee from us. We are not to be distracted by the enemy but recognize that what he does is so that we can resist and bring it down, yet at the same time keep our focus on the Lord.[50]

Stevens ended his teaching on transference by mentioning that transference has worked to attack the congregation before in the past:

> Now the whole purpose right not – on Satan's part – is to work transference to "hit" within the body. It's an eternal vigilance, it's the one thing I've watched for year after year: to find the bond, find the contact, find the thing that gets at people while Satan is out to destroy the you. Our immunities will come when we can break those contacts successfully in the spirit. We can reach into God, draw His blessing, draw His anointing, and proceed to be the effective, aggressive army of the Lord that God first ordained that we should be. . . .Can you refer back to what happened in the early days of witchcraft, and everything came against the body? One time God removed a whole segment of people from the body. I've never been able to approve of the way God did it, but it was certainly an effective way . . . . And the Valley Church from that time on began to grow; from that time on it became effective. Up to that time it was stalemated. As soon as the thing was removed we began to move on.[51]

What Stevens is talking about is the Split of 1967, where over 40 people left the Valley Church. He had conveniently rationalized the whole thing off as nothing but a witchcraft assault waged by his recent convert, the ex-witch, who had turned against him and sowed seeds of discord among the elders. In fact, had literally turned some of the elders against John Robert. Unfortunately, there was much more behind the Split of 1967 than just witchcraft and transference. What really took place was a combination of possible physical adultery, injustice, and witchcraft and transference against the elders from John Robert Stevens himself.

Notes:

1. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (8 JAN 66).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (19 FEB 66).

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (12 MAR 66).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ex-Walk member (1965-1967: who wishes to remain anonymous), private telephone interviews with Woodrow Nichols (13 & 14 JUL 78). Transcript on file at SCP.

17. John Robert Stevens, private tape of Valley Church elders meeting (27 MAR 66).

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded during Valley Church service (27 MAR 66).

21. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting in La Mirada, CA (21 MAY 66).

22. Ibid. In Maui, the "force" is known as *mana*, and its practitioners (i.e. sorcerers) are known as Kahunas.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (18 JUN 66).

26. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (5 NOV 66).

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. 29 John Robert Stevens, *The First Principles*, 4th ed. (Sepulveda, CA: Living Word Publications, 1958), p. 57.

30. Stevens, elders meeting (5 NOV 66), op. cit.

31. Ibid.

32. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at joint Valley Church-Grace Chapel elders meeting at South Gate (12 NOV 66).

33. Ibid.

34. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church service (early 1967).

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. John Robert Stevens, "Signs, Symptoms, and Symbols," Living Word Tapes (20 SEP 75).

38. Ibid.

39. John Robert Stevens, "An Explanation of Free Spirits and Spiritual Potential," Living Word Tapes (no date).

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Stevens, *First Principles*, op. cit.

43. Stevens, Valley service (early 1967), op. cit.

44. John Robert Stevens, "The Principle of Transference," Living Word Tapes (1976).

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., also John Robert Stevens, *A Manual for Soldiers* (N. Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 1974), p. 3:

> "Even in the dead soul realm, transference works just through the power of suggestion. The world uses it. If in the soul realm transference is used through hypnosis, through counseling, and through suggestion, how much more in the spirit realm can we prophesy to one another and convey a thousand times more?"

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. John Robert Stevens, "The Threat Within," Living Word Tapes (11 MAR 76).

50. Stevens, *First Principles*, op. cit.

51. Stevens, "The Threat Within,". op. cit.

Chapter Nine:

The Split of 1967

The Problem of Martha

The vision that John Robert had of Martha in a coffin and his subsequent interpretation was the culmination of a problem he was going through with his wife. In the early Sixties, Martha had undergone the traditional middle-age crisis that all women sooner or later have to go through, and it seems that as the result of a conversation with a group of elders on 8 SEP 65, that John Robert wasn't handling this situation very sensitively. In fact, he told Earl Leasure, elder at the Valley Church, that he was married to the devil and that his marriage had become hell on earth.[1]

This idea, that Stevens was not coping with his wife's new phase, is corroborated by what he was telling the intercessor's during his time with them at the office. He expressed his view to them that he thought that people should be allowed to have several marriages, depending on their age. He had, unfortunately, married when he was too young, and had married a woman two years his senior. Now that she had become more cold, her sexual drive waning, there was nothing else for him to do but to seek out some other alternative.[2] The vision of Martha in the coffin should, of course, be seen in the light of this confession. This vision occurred just after Stevens began holding meetings in the home of the civil engineer in the Valley.[3] Immediately following this vision, the engineer's wife began referring to herself around the intercessors as Sister Stevens. In other words, she had become his spiritual wife.

Leasure and another elder began having doubts about this woman's "off color" philosophy about spiritual marriage as early as 1962, when it first became to be well known among the leadership (some of he intercessors were the wives of the elders and deacons). It was not, however, until the 8 SEP 65 meeting that Leasure and a group of three other elders came to Stevens "concerning various unscriptural practices fostered within the confines of The Church of The Living Word":

> This carnal, sectarian spirit was promulgated by an elite group within the church [the intercessors]. Their exalted position was directed towards the dividing and subjugating of the eldership, confirmed by special revelation. I Cor. 1:10-12; 3: 3-5. It must be noted that most of these women did not come under the spiritual headship of a husband in the home.
>
> Should intercessors pray for the death of fellow members within the church? Why was Sister Stevens [Martha] chosen for this prayer?[4]

Mr. Leasure, being a godly man, did not immediately suspect Stevens of adultery, but he believed it was the only Scriptural thing to do to bring everything out into the open so that it could be put to rest once and for all in the minds of the people. Nothing was resolved at this meeting and the issue wasn't faced again for almost two years because right after this Stevens began introducing the secret doctrines that he had learned from the ex-witch, especially the revelation about the yogini being a Nephilim (and that Martha, too, had succumbed to the temptations of the Nephilims, becoming one herself).[5]

Leasure had noticed not only a change in the relationship between Stevens and the elder's wife (his "spiritual bride") following the vision of Martha in the coffin, but noticed that the interpretation of prophecy began to change from this time as well. Leasure had started going to Grace Chapel of South Gate in 1956, and had become an elder in the Valley Church when it was formed in 1965. He was a conscientious man (he had been a missionary in Africa) and believed that everything had to jibe with the Scriptures. This, of course, went against John Robert's thrust of new revelation, and it was only inevitable that trouble between the two men would arise.

During the teaching of the secret doctrines of the ex-witch at the elders meetings, Leasure and a couple of others grew deeply disturbed over John Robert's acceptance of everything he was learning through the "probe":

> He admitted to me personally and to some of the elders that he had definitely hypnotized her [the ex-witch] and he learned a lot of information, and this was the thing that disturbed me.[6]

Leasure had purchased an enormous volume on demonology at this time and soon saw that Stevens was getting in way over his head in doctrines of the devil. The year 1966 also brought out a few other connected items that made the appearance of adultery seem more likely. The elder's wife began telling the other intercessors that she and John Robert were going to be eventually married at the Valley Church just as soon as God judged both Martha and her husband with death. This would free her and Stevens so that they might be able to become physically married as well as spiritually married. Thus, they would be able to raise up "godly seed" that would be borne through their union.[7]

Since 1962, Stevens had been counseling this woman, and with the advent of the "probe" ministry, he had finally been able to get through to the traumatic experiences she had suffered when she was a young girl. As a result of sexual assaults, she had developed a natural distrust towards men, bordering on animosity. Only Brother Stevens had freed her from this bondage, and now she owed him her total commitment in the spirit. She then told the intercessors that neither she nor Stevens had been having sexual relations with their spouses for the past 2 ½ years because God had set them apart to be man and wife (i.e., to have relations with their real spouses would, in a bizarre way, be spiritual adultery). However, by September of 1966, the woman had begun to downplay this belief because a scandal had begun to come to the surface. The scandal, of course, concerned John Robert Stevens and this woman. It was started by the ex-witch (who also wanted to be John Robert's spiritual bride), who out of jealousy, began to go to the elders and tell them that she was concerned about the adultery between John Robert and the elder's wife.

The Pot Boils

The elders, concerned that these rumors were beginning to effect the worship of the Valley Church, began to confront Stevens over this matter, hoping that the problem could be aired and dealt with in a Biblical manner. But Stevens either shrugged the whole thing off as nothing but witchcraft or distracted their attention with new revelations. Thus, the situation festered until it finally ended in tragedy for the whole church. As ex-elder Leasure relates this period:

> Elders meetings became more frequent as situations began to arise in the church. And I began to see that many times, even at these elders meetings, many of the elders had things of a doctrinal nature, teachings concerning the church in general, and many questions in their minds they wanted to discuss . . . . But when we arrived at these meetings: "Oh, there's something so important – this has arisen; oh, you must know about this" – and we'd get off on these talks and many of the things involved people (as I see now) that became aware in the church that something was wrong, and more or less, would bring things out that concerned Stevens. As a result, he would build up somewhat of a background to situations so if a person had not heard then they would be already prepared – they'd know the interpretation . . . . and, therefore, if they inquired concerning what was happening, it was already explained. So, therefore, I began to see that a lot of these meetings, more or less, were dampers to a lot of the problems in the church.[8]

In other words, Stevens began acting like the classical guilty man, distracting his elders in a massive game of cover-up. He even had another meeting with the Lord at the end of 1966, just in case people were beginning to doubt his credibility (after all, would the Lord appear in person to an adulterer?). This meeting took place in Oxnard, California, and was even recorded by Stevens (no one ever heard the recording). During this meeting, Stevens was given the "position as Paul to be an apostle," that is, "a direct meeting with Jesus." Stevens later related that he was totally surprised by this meeting and was disturbed because during it, the Lord had such a stern look on His face.[9]

This did not effect the judgment of the ex-witch, however; she told the elders that he had not met the Lord, but an angel of light – in fact, Satan himself! Finally, on 22 APR 67, the elders had it out with John Robert at the Saturday morning elders meeting at the Valley Church. By remaining firm, they prevented Stevens from sidetracking the issue and tried to persuade him to allow them to bring the ex-witch to the next meeting so that the whole thing could be brought out in the open, using the Scriptural procedures laid out in the gospel of Matthew.[10] Stevens immediately overruled this request, stating that he would rather that she come and see him personally![11] He then told them that, regretfully, he had direct revelation that the ex-witch had fallen away from the Lord and was now being used by devils as a Nephilim. The elders were not happy with his verdict but let the subject go, progressing on to other things. However, the spirit of contention remained in the meeting, souring all further discussions.

There was wide disagreement between the elders and Stevens over the interpretation of what was taking place with a new convert that had repented in the previous Wednesday night service. At this point, Stevens exercised his "gift of knowledge" and stated that one of the elders (the leader of the contention) had a "bad spirit."[12] The elder turned to the rest of the elders and demanded that John Robert's discernment be confirmed (confirmation of prophecy or prophetic gifts must be confirmed according to the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 14:29). Stevens then interrupts this process and declares that his "spirit isn't right with him and with God."[13] The elder then lost his temper and replied, "That's it! My spirit is wrong! Everyone who disagrees with you is wrong!"[14]

After this outburst the die was cast. The elders came right to the point, telling Stevens that they were concerned over the things he had learned from the ex-witch. Stevens admitted that he had

been influenced by her: "I don't deny that she's been a great influence";[15] but stated that all he had learned were spiritual principles that could either be used for good or for evil. The meeting eventually disbanded with no resolution, Stevens probably hoping that something else would come up to get him out of the mess.

That his mind was definitely disturbed at this time is made shockingly clear by what he told the intercessors shortly afterwards. He told them, or rather prophesied to them, that when this whole escapade was over "there would be six graves when judgment came on this thing."[16] The six graves would be for one of the elders, his own mother (the reasons are not stated, but she must have been interfering with his ministry, maybe as the result of concern over Martha), the husband of his "spiritual bride," the yogini (who had gotten him into the whole mess of witchcraft to begin with), the ex-witch, and, of course, his wife, Martha.[17]

This disturbed one of the intercessors, who went home and told her husband. They soon arranged a meeting with another elder (who was extremely loyal to Stevens) the night of 6 MAY 67, hoping that they could stop any trouble before it got out of hand. Instead, this meeting precipitated the Split of 1967, where at least 45 people left the Valley Church.

The Split

The ironic twist to the events leading up to the Split of 1967 was that the ex-witch and the elder's wife (John Robert's "spiritual bride"), were the closest of friends. In fact, as Leasure observed, "No one ever saw one without the other."[18] It was this friendship that allowed the ex-witch one day, while visiting the elder's wife at her home, to pick up some greeting cards that she had given to Stevens (which she was saving for sentimental reasons). The greeting cards were adorned with teddy bears and the elder's wife had written: "I'd like to go to beddy with you."[19]

These cards furnished hardcore evidence (at least as far as the ex-witch was concerned) to the insinuations she had been making to some of the elders (as the result of being snubbed by Stevens in favor of the elder's wife). She presented these cards to one of the elders who immediately called the rest of the more concerned elders and arranged to meet them the next morning at Howard Johnsons. At this meeting the cards were presented and they discussed plans on how to confront John Robert with the problem. He was still refusing to let them bring the ex-witch to an elders meeting so that they could resolve the matter scripturally.[20] It was decided that one of the elders and one of the intercessors would go and see one of the elders of Grace Chapel of South Gate, hoping that if they could receive the support of all of the elders in the Walk, Stevens would finally be forced to deal with the issue (it must be remembered that these elders only had John Robert's well-being in mind, and were not out to get him).

On Saturday, 6 MAY 67, the intercessor and the elder drove up and met with the elder and discussed the problem openly with him. They agreed that the information was too sensitive to be discussed openly, and therefore should be kept secret until he could notify the rest of the elders so that they could decide on a Biblical course of action. However, immediately after they left, the South Gate elder contacted Stevens and spilled the whole story to him, warning him that the elders in the Valley Church were rebelling against his authority. Not one of the Valley Church elders had counted on such submissive loyalty from this man to Stevens. John Robert, to say the

least, was alarmed, and overreacted in such a defensive manner, that any indication of his innocence was soon lost in a wide credibility gap.

The next morning, 7 MAY 67, following the Grace Chapel of South Gate service; Stevens announced that all elders should remain after the service "for something very important."[21] He arranged for them to meet later that afternoon, before the evening service at the Valley Church. During this meeting he told them that most of the elders at the Valley Church had fallen under the spell of witchcraft, set up by a devil-triad operating through the ex-witch, who had become a full-fledged Nephilim (as a result of her not submitting to Stevens). That Stevens overreacted in such a manner, enough to call for such a preemptive strike against those who were seeking to help him out of genuine Christian love, came as no real surprise to Leasure. Another elder, who had recently left to go to another ministry, had told Leasure that Stevens was so confused about his relationships with women that he didn't know "his way from Dan to Beersheba."[22]

That evening, John Robert showed up in the back room (where the elders gathered before they went out on the platform for the service) with the full contingency of the South Gate elders. The Valley Church elders were immediately on the defensive, coming under the direct accusatory glare of their comrades at Grace Chapel. It was a classic witch hunt, putting psychological fear and submission into most of the Valley Church elders (who knew they were being suspected of working for Satan). Most of them were afraid to speak against what was happening. Stevens had succeeded in his first stage of spiritual intimidation: he was no fool; no one was going to pull the rug out from underneath his feet. Leasure and the rest of the elders who had met at Howard Johnsons felt betrayed. However, Leasure drew courage and tried to prevent Stevens from doing anything that might divide the church.

Stevens ignored Leasure, swearing that he was going "out there [into the service] and blow this whole thing sky-high!"[23] Leasure was seated next to an elder from South Gate who kept giving him dirty looks, especially when Leasure began to dispute with Stevens. In other words, the elders from Grace Chapel were so heavily programmed to believe that witchcraft was running rampant in the Valley Church, they interpreted everything that took place with a closed mind towards any of the actual facts. Leasure tried to talk to the man: "Listen, Brother, this didn't happen overnight. You're not going to solve this thing overnight. With the state of mind you're in now you're not even in a state to pray!"[24] The other man, of course, did not listen, seeing everything that Leasure said as being a psychological ploy (i.e., witchcraft).

He then tried another appeal to Stevens and everyone else: "Brothers, you were talking about the New Testament church; you're violating every principle in the New Testament church in the way you're handling this." They answered, "Oh no, no! This thing's been going on – we've let it go too long!" But Leasure, even realizing that the cards were stacked against him, continued, "Well, why have you let it go this long? And why do you think you're going to solve it all tonight? Why do you go out and bring in all these people out here – there's young people [in the service who shouldn't have to hear of such things] that know nothing about this, families, and so on, and people that are having problems in their life. Why add this thing and throw it out there and break this church in two? You're undoing everything you started to do!"[25]

Leasure's constant pleading began to show signs. But before anything concrete could be resolved, the service began on the other side of the door, with Martha leading the congregation in singing. As Leasure watched his support dissipate, he gave one final plea, in fact, he raised his voice and prophesied: "This night this church is split if you go out!" Out of a respect for prophecy the elders began to settle down. However, Stevens, sensing his hold weakening, began to weep, saying that if everyone was out to get him, maybe he had just better go get his coat and hat and leave. He then turned to the elders and said:

They're out to destroy me. There've been charges made against me. Oh, some of you have seen those cards [the teddy bear greeting cards], well, you don't understand. You just don't understand. I've worked all these years, and if this is what you want to do and get rid of me. . . .[26]

He was unable to finish because he was crying to hard. Even though this was mostly an act, filled with statements that were false (there had never been any charges brought against him; in fact, the purpose the elders wanted in bringing the ex-witch to the elders meeting was to determine if there should be any charges brought against him), his tears worked wonders. All of the elders from South Gate grew indignant and even some of the Valley Church elders (hoping they could dispel any association with the witchcraft) rose to John Robert's defense (even though no one was accusing him of anything).

This show of support encouraged Stevens to continue his planned course of action. He called for a vote: "All in favor of going out there raise your hands."[27] All but a few raised their hands. Then, in a show of force, they all marched out of the room and into the service. The congregation stopped singing, amazed that there were so many elders on the platform (it must be remembered that most of the members had no idea of anything that was going on, including the rumors of adultery). Stevens wasted no time in going to the podium and coming right to the point. "I've been accused of an immoral relationship," he said, leaning over the podium. "Charges have been leveled against me concerning adultery."[28] There was a deep sound in the congregation as most of the members caught their breaths. But before anyone could grasp the significance of what he had said, he went into a quick dissertation of the witchcraft that had infiltrated the Valley Church through the agency of the ex-witch. He told them bluntly and plainly that she was working for the devil and was out to destroy the church.

The ex-witch stood to her feet and walked down the aisle, coming to a halt 15 feet in front of Stevens. "May I speak?" she asked.[29] John Robert turned to his wife and asked her if the ex-witch should be allowed to speak. "No," Martha said[30] (it is hard to blame her since she would have been publicly embarrassed and disgraced if it were proven in public that her husband had been unfaithful to her). Just then a crippled woman got up in the back of the church and said, "I don't understand what's going on here tonight. What is the meaning of this? Something about this is out of order."

Stevens said, "Oh no, the elders have resolved this thing." At this point, Leasure stood and said from the platform, "I'm sorry I have to disagree with Brother Stevens, but this meeting is completely out of order tonight. The scriptures teach that if we have ought against our brother and we go to him and he is not willing to hear them, we're to take others, and if we cannot

resolve it, then it's brought to the church. This thing has never been resolved with the elders in this church and many of the elders in this church know nothing of what is going on."[31]

At the visible sign of disagreement among the elders, the congregation became suddenly confused, everybody beginning to talk at once. But then, the elder's wife (her name had never been mentioned) stood up, and very emotionally began to defend her relationship with Stevens. She told the congregation that she had "amorous feelings towards Brother Stevens but he had redirected them."[32] There relationship "had only been spiritual."[33] To many of the elders and members, this was a direct sign of guilt, giving credence to the charges. Most of the members that subsequently left said that this testimony from the elder's wife convinced them that Stevens was guilty as charged.

Suddenly, the ex-witch spoke up, still standing before Stevens, "I am being charged. May I answer those charges?" Stevens looked her right in the eye and said, "No!"[34] He then had two of the elders on the platform get up and escort her out of the church (she never stepped foot inside again). The elder's wife continued explaining that the cards [the teddy bear greeting cards, which must have come as a total surprise to almost everyone since they had no idea what she was talking about] were to be interpreted in light of the ministry of the intercessors: "We were showing our love for Brother Stevens and his ministry. The Lord had raised us up to love him. They [the intercessors] were his love-helpers. The cards were not to be interpreted in the wrong way."[35]

Stevens then directly faced the congregation, raised his right hand and swore, "I swear I have not had an immoral relationship with another woman. All that believe me, stand up!"[36] All but twelve people stood to their feet. Then, according to Leasure, the congregation had a "let's show our love for Brother Stevens" time. But instead in joining in with the festivities, Leasure stood (he was one of the twelve who had remained seated) and opened up his Bible and read a verse that "made mention that the fellowship was broken." Then he prophesied: "Mark it! This night, this fellowship is broken in the church!"[37]

At this point, one of the elders (an attorney working for the district attorney's office) stood up on the platform and said that the information about the greeting cards (since the elder's wife had breeched the subject) would never stand up as evidence in a court of law. In other words, it was impossible to prove anything, so Brother Stevens was automatically presumed to be innocent. Stevens however, did not bother to hang around and watch the reaction of the congregation to this legal justification of his innocence. He quickly left the service and went home.

Leasure turned on the platform and faced one of the head elders of South Gate. "How can this be, Brother_____?" he asked him; "How can it be?" The elder looked at him and shrugged his shoulders: "Oh, this is nothing new. Women have been Stevens' problem for years."[38]

The Aftermath

To Stevens, this meeting solved the whole issue. If the troublemaking elders were smart, they would let the whole thing die a natural death and adjust to the new regime. However, Leasure and few of the other elders, were not satisfied, seeing the actions of John Robert on the night of 7

MAY 67 as a confirmation of their worst fears. Unfortunately, Leasure and four of the other elders and deacons were in the minority. The pastor of the Valley Church and nine of the elders and deacons had decided that political expediency was the right course of action and either ignored or disavowed themselves from Leasure and the others. After all, the church was legally Stevens and he had the right to keep the keys and lock up the church if he saw fit. If he didn't have the Holy Spirit on his side, at least he had the law of the land.

Leasure confronted every one of these elders who had betrayed him on their resolution to force Stevens to have an open meeting with the ex-witch:

> I had actually had certain elders (and I could name the certain ones – and they're probably there today) that said to me, they said, "Oh yes, we know about these things." In fact, one person may surprise you if I tell you his name, but he came right out and said to me, he said, "Listen, I've been in the ministry all of these 25 years . . . . where am I going to go . . . . if I leave?" I pointed out to certain things to him, I said, "Look, . . . it's one of two things . . . . you have to see the situation." He said, "But look at my situation . . . . I left one church to come here. If I depart now . . . . I'm done for; I have no place to go."
>
> Well, I can see: that's the natural feeling of security. It will, give you that if you want natural security, if you'll go along with everything. But the real issue was a spiritual situation, and as we discussed it he just pointblank said, "Well, until something else better comes along I'm going to stick with it." But I pointed out the various things in relation to Scripture that were wrong . . . . and another elder I pointed it out to said, "Well, I don't have anyplace else to go . . . . I came to know the Lord here . . . . and it's done a lot for me . . . . I see these things as wrong, but . . . . it's always been that way and I've just come to accept it – go along with it."[39]

Leasure, being totally committed to the Scriptures, was not thwarted. He, and the other elders and deacons who supported him, continued to press Stevens to hold a special meeting so that their problems could once and finally be resolved. According to his open letter to the Valley Church, dated 24 JUN 67:

> On May 10, 1967, following the Sunday evening demolition, Brother Stevens admitted to me that he had lost good men and had failed to heed the advice of elders and ministries, whom the Lord had appointed to work with him. Brother Stevens further admitted that the episode on the previous Sunday [7 MAY 67] evening settled nothing. I then requested that we back up, have a meeting of the elders, and get to the bottom of the problem. He agreed to a meeting.[40]

He may have agreed to the meeting but he kept stalling it off until, finally, on 5 JUN 67, Leasure and four of the elders and deacons issued an ultimatum:

> Dear Brother Stevens,

> By the teaching set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, we would have a Scriptural basis at this time to bring before the local church all the problems that have been brought before you privately and collectively. However, in consideration of your position, the people of the church, and the reputation of the church, we have wanted to show the grace of God and our good intentions by having an elder's meeting in which these problems are openly discussed.
>
> Since we have not resigned as elders of the Church of the Living Word, we do hereby request an elder's meeting to be held on Monday, June 12, 1967 in the Church of the Living Word at 7:30 P.M.[41]

It was signed, "Brothers in Christ", followed by their five signatures. No one expected the reply that came three days later. It perhaps was the most flagrant Scriptural disobedience in the whole murky career of John Robert Stevens. John Robert sent a letter to the five elders and deacons that signed the ultimatum and to the rest of the people who had remained seated on the night of 7 MAY 67. It was a form letter and read in part as thus:

> Each one of you Elders and Deacons who have divided yourselves from us have forsaken the office and ministry to which God had appointed you, and in your unfaithfulness for the past few weeks, you have hardened your hearts and manifested a spirit which is not of God.
>
> Therefore God has spoken to us that you should be removed from the office and ministry you left. The Elders and Deacons and I have the spiritual authority to do this, and I have the legal authority to do this.
>
> I am well aware of the questions and problems you have been facing and the satanic source of them . . . .To cause division, or to minister this devilish bitterness of spirit, or to be identified with it, or not rebuke it certainly is not manifesting deaconship, or eldership. With the Lord's blessing so rich upon both of the churches at this time, the Elders and Deacons have no desire to have a meeting of the Elders and Deacons such as the division has requested. The spirit so far shown would assure the failure of such a meeting to accomplish anything constructive or edifying.
>
> You are hereby removed from your office and from the fellowship of the Church of the Living Word because God has spoken to us to do so. He has born witness that this spirit must be removed from the Church. We have His promise, "Them that are without, God judgeth". We cannot have within this Body "the Little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump."[42]

As a result of the formal excommunication of these few scapegoats roughly 45 people split off from the Valley Church, causing the spiritual life of both the excommunicants and the members to suffer for quite some time afterwards. Like David's sin in the Old Testament, one man's disobedience soon encompasses the whole flock.

Stevens wasted no time from the pulpit of the Valley Church to denounce the whole thing as witchcraft, led by the ex-witch, who had contaminated the spirits of all those who had been excommunicated (and who, were now "demonic"). In fact, Stevens warned the Valley Church that these divisive people were so potentially dangerous, no one in the church was to contact them (or phone them) in any manner.[43]

The unanswered question to the whole thing is, of course, was John Robert Stevens unfaithful to his wife? As mentioned by the attorney during the church service, there wasn't any evidence that would stand up in a court of law. As mentioned by an ex-Deacon, there were no photographs.[44] However, according to his wife, Martha, John Robert was not only unfaithful, he almost shut her totally out of the church organization after the split:

> During the mid and late sixties, when the church was in an expansive growth period, I discovered that my Husband was having a sexual on-going affair with one of the parishioner's wife. As well as I can determine, this sexual on-going affair lasted nearly five years. It became so obvious to the congregation that problems began to arise within the church and ultimately a split in the congregation occurred over the issue of my Husband's infidelity to me.
>
> It should be understood that I, at the time of this affair, was totally and completely involved in my Husband and his ministry. Knowing that this affair was having a derogatory affect on the church, I confronted him with it. His reaction was uncharacteristically violent. He grabbed my shoulders, threw me against the wall and slammed my head against it several times. He then slapped me full force across the face causing my nose to bleed. He later expressed deep sorrow and regret for his violence, and with a fear of him and a desire not to destroy him and his church, I decided not to pursue the matter or dissolve my marriage.
>
> . . . . I began to feel that my Husband was concerned about my position in the church and that he wanted me to have as little public exposure as possible in order not to diminish his position. Finally, the situation worsened to the point that I was almost totally shut out from the church organization.[45]

Whether or not this is true (this testimony comes from a divorce declaration where quite a bit of money is concerned), it does bear out that John Robert was not following Scriptural procedure in the way he handled the problem. At least he had been given a trial when he was excommunicated from the AOG (even though it had been a kangaroo court). The least he could have done would be to have met with the elders and have told them to their faces that they were excommunicated. The actions of John Robert Stevens from beginning to end leave the objective critic with no other verdict than he must have been guilty as "almost" charged.

Brother Leasure saw the ultimate problem as one of having the highest authority of the church invested in one man, that is, one apostle. As he wrote in his open letter to the Valley Church:

> The works of the flesh are still present! When the church recognizes only one apostle, there is real trouble when the scriptural pattern is not followed. Therefore, how can so-called "factious" brethren solve their problems with Brother Stevens alone?[46]

However, for those brethren who decided to be politically pragmatic, there was a very good reason to go along with John Robert Stevens. As Martha mentioned, this split occurred during a time of expansion. Shortly afterwards, the large ingathering of the Jesus Movement brought hundreds of new sheep into the fold. In 1968, both The Church of The Living Word of Sepulveda, and Living Word, Inc. (the tape and literature publishing ministry) were incorporated under the laws of the State of California as non-profit religious organizations. The husband (the elder) of the woman he was having his "spiritual" (and allegedly physical) relationship with was made an apostle and sent to the San Francisco Bay area, where he now presides over many churches in Northern California. To be an alleged cuckold was obviously worth price of great glory for a piece of the action.

Notes:

1. Mr. Earl Leasure (ex-Walk elder 1956-1967), "Open Letter to The Membership of the Church of the Living Word" (24 JUN 67), p. 1.

2. Ex-Walk Intercessor and Deacon (1962-1967: who wish to remain anonymous) in private interview with SCP (7 JUN 77). Transcript on file at SCP.

3. Earl Leasure, private interview with SCP (12 & 13 JUN 77):

> And the general interpretation was that he was to consider her [Martha] dead, even from a physical point of view . . . . To do the greater will of God he would be free from any responsibility to his natural wife.

4. Leasure, "Open Letter...," op. cit.

5. In "The Threat Within," The Living Word This Week (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 2 MAY 76) John Robert Stevens defines the Nephilim:

> A study of the battle of the ages, of even the Old Testament times, will reveal that the warfare against God's people was infiltrated with certain demonic forces which we call nephilim spirits. Whenever total judgment is coming, Satan uses those who are direct contacts through whom he can operate and control things. At one time Satan offered to Christ all the kingdoms of the world if He would bow down and worship him. Most people do not understand that had Jesus accepted, from that time on the Spirit of Jesus Christ would have been open to Satan. Christ would have become a nephilim, a son of Satan instead of the Son of the Father. He would have become the operative channel through which the nations of the world would have been governed, controlled, and judged by Satan . . . .
>
> In order to become a nephilim spirit, a person has to give willing consent at some time to the rebellious spirit within, to the extent that there is either an unconscious or conscious rejection of the will of God and a submission to the will of Satan. A nephilim spirit is created not to be possessed but to be absolutely controlled and used by Satan at will for a distinct function. (pp. 2-3.)

6. Leasure, SCP interview, op. cit.

7. Intercessor, op. cit.

8. Leasure, op. cit.

9. Intercessor, op. cit.

10. Matthew 5: 23; 18:15-17.

11. John Robert Stevens, private tape recorded at Valley Church elders meeting (22 APR 67).

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Private tape of ex-Walk intercessor and deacon (1962-1967: who wish to remain anonymous) 8 MAY 67.

17. As divine justice would have it, all six of the people are still alive today.

18. Leasure, op. cit.

19. Ibid., and intercessor, op. cit.

20. On top of this, Stevens was confusing the issue even further by priming the intercessors with false information to take home to their husbands (largely elders and deacons) to create dissention in their households, hoping this would create a diversion.

21. Leasure, op. cit.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., and intercessor, op. cit.

29. Leasure, op. cit.

30. Intercessor, op. cit.

31. Leasure, op. cit.

32. Intercessor, op. cit.

33. Leasure, op. cit.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Intercessor, op. cit.

37. Leasure, op. cit.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Leasure, "Open Letter....," op. cit., p. 2.

41. Private letter to Brother Stevens from Elders and Deacons of the Church of the Living Word (5 JUN 67), p. 1.

42. Private form letter to Elders and Deacons of the "division" from John Robert Stevens and the Elders and Deacons of the Church of the Living Word and Grace Chapel of South Gate (8 JUN 67), p. l.

43. Intercessor, op. cit.

44. Ibid.

45. Martha Stevens, declaration in divorce papers as filed with the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, case no. D973296 (2 NOV 78), pp. 4-5.

46. Leasure, "Open Letter...,"op. cit.

Chapter Ten:

The New Step Into The Day of Revelation

The Jesus Movement

If it had not been for at least two important events, the Walk would more than likely have faded off into the oblivion reserved for most small movements: they continue to exist, but do not expand, never propagating another generation to take the place of the one before. However, a chance meeting with a pastor from Chula Vista (a suburb of San Diego) and the influx of thousands of young people into Christianity (the result of large-scale disenchantment with the "system," drugs, sex, and other roads that were sought, were found not leading not into salvation.

The pastor from San Diego, Royal D. Cronquist, was once under the submission of an evangelist from Texas. Because his church chose to raise money for a traveling healing-evangelist in Southern California, the Texas evangelist came down hard on Cronquist, especially in the spiritual (or psychic) realm. After all, the Texas evangelist was the only authorized outside minister that was to receive the offerings of Cronquist's flock. As a result of the psychic warfare being waged against him, Cronquist sought help from John Robert Stevens in 1966. He had met him a few years earlier (after being introduced to Stevens by an elder of South Gate) in April 1962, and had been impressed with his knowledge of spiritual warfare and his understanding of witchcraft.[1]

Stevens and Cronquist began a long a fruitful relationship in the late Sixties, especially after Stevens ministered the "probe" to Cronquist, freeing him from the psychic bondage of the Texas evangelist.[2] This proved to be fruitful for both men because they both experienced the deluge of new members as the rip-tide of the Jesus Movement brought in the first wave of ex-dopers, ex-surfers, ex-yogis, and ex-everything-else into both Cronquist's Chula Vista church (Coniah Chapel) and the Walk churches in South Gate and Sepulveda. Unfortunately for the new Christians, the Walk seemed just what they were looking for in their as yet unbiblical trained consciousnesses. Most of these new members were already old pros when it came to experiencing the reality of altered states of consciousness and psychic power, having walked these paths before on LSD, TM, Zen, yoga, marijuana, and a plethora of means saturating America during these troubled times. However, for those who had eyes to see (most traditional churches were offended by these types of people and usually had nothing to do with them until they shaved, got haircuts, and straightened-up: they didn't want them to contaminate their own children), there was an awakening taking place that was at least of the same magnitude as the Cold War Awakening some twenty years earlier. In the majority of cases, only the Pentecostals responded with open arms, and, tragic as it is, quite a few of these Pentecostals were seeking kingdoms of their own. But in Southern California, one of the greatest draws were churches that were into End Time eschatology. In this category, the Walk had few rivals if none at all.

We must, even though it is hard to remember, never forget that in the three years alone of 1969-1971, literally tens of thousands of young people (predominantly between 15 and 25) came to Christ in one of the largest revivals of this century. A large percentage of these young people lived on the West Coast, the majority of which resided in Southern California. However, the

main question remains unanswered: What attracted herds of these people to the Walk when the competition was so severe? The answer to that lies in the brilliant Saturday night meetings Stevens set up known as the Bless-In. The Bless-In provided the made-to-order type of spiritual experience many of these young people were looking for.

The Bless-In

What is a Bless-In? The Bless-In is largely a kind of service that allows the members of the Walk to freely exercise their "sign" gifts. In the late Sixties, after the debacle in the Valley Church, John Robert taught a whole series on the "probe" to the public assembly (he had decided the congregations were finally ready to teach this new revelation since they had remained loyal to him during the Split of 1967). This series, of course, made it possible for members to discover repressed things in their subconscious minds so that through the techniques of "spiritual perception" they could become "free spirits." In the Feast of Tabernacles of 1970, Stevens taught the Walk that they had to utilize both their imaginations and aggressiveness in the spirit if they were ever break through into the "manifestation:

> By the use of your imagination in worship, you can actually think yourself in the presence of the Lord. The human mind, with its imagination, is capable of many things. It can become a tool of your spirit, so that when God gives you a promise, and something is set before you, you can give it substance or an image, by your imagination . . . .
>
> In aggressiveness, you have a key that will help you more than anything else. . . .The key is to keep your spirit aggressive. Submission is not passive – it is very aggressive. An officer in the army doesn't want a soldier who says listlessly, "Sergeant, I'm obedient to you. I'm submissive to anything you say." He wants someone who salutes sharply, says, "Yes sir," and turns briskly to do what he was told. That's aggressive submission. Submission that is passive just drifts along.[3]

These were the fundamental principles that formed the basis of the Bless-In: imagination and aggressiveness (in fact, when the newness of the Bless-In wore off, it was replaced by "violent intercession" in 1976). John Robert Stevens explains how it works:

> What is a Bless-in? Why do we call it a Bless-in? . . . . Many churches have youth programs that center around the immaturity and soulishness of youth without recognizing that God wants to deal with them in their spirit. We could call this a prayer meeting or a praise service but that wouldn't cover it. "Bless-in" is as good a term as any because we're concerned about what our spirit can do in opening up to the Lord and drawing His blessing: what we can do as individuals in taking down the walls of our spirit so that we can flow together. We become very sensitive in our spirit.
>
> In the Bless-in, we are not too soulish, although the enthusiasm of youth is evident; and we love the way the young people express their worship when they come . . . . During my thirty-seven years in the ministry, I've never seen any young people come

> up to the dedication that I am witnessing these young people reach: a real dedication of discipleship, and that is why we know a Bless-in works. . . . .
>
> The key is that we're worshiping as a Body and not as individuals. It is very essential that you see this. The day of the individual is passing. The world knows that. . . . It's the day of collective operation. . . . This is the day of Body ministry. It's the day that we all blend together and move as a Body an not as an individual . . . . It isn't mumbo jumbo or mysticism, it's one simple thing that is based upon faith. We believe that God is blessing us and we open up our spirit and draw it.[4]

Of course, in order for one to draw a blessing from God and give it to another, it required the member to know the signs of spiritual perception. By 1970, Stevens had developed his "signs" gifts to a thorough system (see Appendix), literally categorizing every part of the body, so that if a burning or feeling came to that part of the body the person would know the spiritual significance. The two areas that concern us the most in a discussion of the Bless-In are the top of the head and the hands. In his definitions of signs in the physical body, Stevens defines the top of the head as thus:

> If you feel something like a hand or a presence on the top of the head, that's a sign that the person is either having or is going to have a meeting with God. . . . This is where the human spirit is and this is why we don't let just anyone lay hands on the top of the head. Hands can be placed on the shoulders, or you can hold the persons [sic] hand. Actually the spirit seems to cover the whole body but primarily it is right in this area of the head.[5]

The hand is, of course, of primary importance in Stevens' scheme of things for it was through this part of the body that he began to move after his initial impartation from Winston I. Nunes in Tacoma in 1951. To Stevens (gathered from several handouts on signs) the right hand is the spiritual hand (or the true one) while the left is the physical(or the false hand). Each finger represents one of the gift ministries, the thumb being the most important because it stands for the apostolic ministry (i.e., for John Robert himself). A crawling on the back of the hand means that receptivity is being cut off; it is through the back of the hand that a person receives blessing. He passes the blessing on with his palms.[6]

All of this is somehow brought together in the booklet Stevens released in 1972, entitled , "What is a Bless-In?":

> In a Bless-In we often make a circle (which we might call a "glory chain") by joining hands. With palms up, place your right hand under your neighbor's left hand. The blessing you are sending flows out from the palm of your right hand and he receives it through the back of his left hand . . . . The force of God's blessing is appropriated through the hands and that is what makes the laying on of hands effective. . . . Imagine yourself breathing through the top of your head, as though it contained the nostrils of your spirit, and then start drawing. We lay hands on the top of your head because this is where you draw in. . . . Sometimes the vibrations of your spirit are too low and not much blessing comes through. When you raise your vibrations to the

> level where the blessing is flowing, you can tune in to it. It is like dialing a radio . . . . How do you raise your vibrations? Without any actual movement, get the feeling of lifting inside your head, above the ears. In the process of doing that, you do something within your mind to lift you to a higher vibration . . . . As we come into new experiences we must search the Scriptures to find what is happening. Not a thing happens-in the Bless-In that could not be explained Scripturally.[7]

This last statement is, of course, true. Unfortunately, the passages in the Scriptures that do explain this phenomenon speak against it as disobedience to God (e.g., see Deuteronomy 18:9-12). The Bless-In not only provided the new converts with a "loose and groovy" form of worship, it also promised that many of these young people would soon be strong and wise enough to enter into the most important campaign of history: raising the apostle into the Kingdom:

> Out of these Bless-Ins has come, not a looseness, but rather some of the greatest dedication that I have ever seen in young people. Real ministries and prophets will come out of this moving of God's Spirit in these Bless-Ins.[8]

This kind of statement reinforced an earlier statement that he had made the previous year: "The longer I am in this Walk where the fullness of the Spirit is coming forth, the more persuaded I am that this will be the largest spiritual move ever to come forth in the history of the Church."[9] As a result of the Bless-In, this statement was showing signs that it might come to pass. Amazingly enough, however, John Robert's greatest disciple was R. D. Cronquist. A majority of the strongest ministries in the near future were to come out of Cronquist's Coniah Chapel in Chula Vista. However, there was still one thing lacking in the Walk that was needed to seal the faithfulness of the young, earnest, aggressive new converts. In the past, whenever John Robert needed to reassure his flock of the eschatological significance of the Walk, he would have an important vision or sometimes, even a personal visitation from the Lord Himself. In the crucial days of the early Seventies, especially after a couple of years had gone by without any major indication that the Tribulation period of the End Time was in sight, the Lord came to John Robert's rescue once again. This time, John Robert was literally taken into the future and was given a vision of the whole panorama of the years 1972-1979. The most amazing thing about this vision was the fact that where Stevens was, seven years in the future, the Kingdom had already come. Therefore, what the vision was really signifying was the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

The Trip Into the Future

The vision that John Robert was given on 13 DEC 72, was perhaps the most significant vision (in light of Walk history) that he ever had. The following day, at Grace Chapel, he told the congregation what had happened to him in a manner that showed that he was still recovering from the mind-shattering event. The tape of this service later was given a strict "restrictive" classification, that is, it was for members only. It begins with a woman's voice: "Thursday evening, December 14th, 1971, at Grace Chapel: a restricted message by John Robert Stevens, titled, "A New Step Into the Day of Revelation."[10]

This was followed by a special introduction added afterwards by John Robert Stevens explaining why the tape was to be restricted:

> During this week that preceded this Thursday, I had had a real meeting with the Lord. During this meeting, I was projected seven years ahead of the present time. It was such a total thing that it almost blew my mind. I could not even remember many of the things such as phone numbers, addresses, and so forth – and I spent the better part of Wednesday of that week wandering in almost a fog. But I was able to clearly remember back the events of what will be the next seven years; at least the things that God meant for me to remember in this amazing experience. Many of these things I am going to hold in my heart because I would not release them until God has given us confirmation . . . . There is a minimum amount of editing on this particular tape; you will understand that as you hear it . . . . But, then, when the revelation ministry began to flow from the pulpit, from that time on everyone seemed to be projected into it. Period. It was the truth; we were projected into it. Period. Like we were facing something that we knew was new and different and there was an excitement in our hearts: another age, another dispensation; we'll call it a movement of God's Spirit that will make this Walk as obsolete as the Old Order has been to us. Not obsolete in the sense that we will go against these things, but we will move on from the present way of worshiping and ministering and teaching to the direct impartation of revelation to people. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."[11]

This last line is, of course, an Old Testament reference to the millennial Kingdom. In one quick week, John Robert had pulled off the biggest coup of his history: he not only gave the kids the kind of End Time mystical experience that they craved, but he also guaranteed that he would keep most of them around for the next seven years. The tape then switches back to the service itself:

> I knew I was living in 1979 – now this sounds weird – and I was remembering things that happened in the seven years that are to come . . . . God did one thing for me that I am just really grateful for: I can see from what's coming what's important for us to do now and what's going to be absolutely pointless and worthless to do for the next seven years. And in seven years – I'm not date-setting – but I was looking back from the Kingdom.[12]

Stevens then went on and explained that great things were coming, without telling them anything specifically because, after all, like he said in his special introduction, he would have to have confirmation before he could do something like that. Stevens told his eager flock that whole areas in the future would be filled with their aura as they moved into the new plane of Kingdom revelation.

However, he hadn't gotten very far when the pastor from the Antelope Valley church (near the Mojave desert), Doug Grills, in a deeply disturbed voice, asked Stevens if the Walk was the occult:

> Grills: Are we in the occult? You seem to know so much about witchcraft and Spiritualism and everything else.
>
> Stevens: Of course, we understand those things, because we deal with it. We're not in it but I think we successfully cope with it . . . . No, we're not in the occult. But we can deal with the occult. We're not in Spiritualism.[13]

He then gave his standard speech about how Spiritualism was a satanic sneak preview that was meant to discredit the real thing when it came forth in the Walk. He reminded them of his "Clouds of Witnesses" sermon of 1953 when he first opened up the new revelation of communicating with the dead saints that have gone on before us, as well as angels, because we will fight our war in the spiritual planes where they dwell. After this, John Robert begins to teach the full implications of a Latter Rain teaching, a teaching that is so potentially dangerous, it needs to be dealt with seriously, especially in light of the recent Jonestown tragedy:

> One thing I want you to understand: He's coming now to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe. He's not coming this time to be put to death: He's coming to rule! He's not coming as a Lamb to be slaughtered as our Passover: He's coming as the Lion of Judah, to rule with a rod of iron. And all the forces of the world that are coming up strong are going to see this End Time remnant come with a power to break them. I was aware of one thing more than ever before, and we should contend for it: Believe God for the true authority to come that belongs to this hour! It's not an authority that belonged to the Church in the days past: it's an authority that belongs to it today! "It's the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom, little flock." Little flock, believe it! And we're going to bind the kings in fetters. We're going to bring things into submission to the Lord.[14]

A person would not be alone if he detected literalness to the idea of bringing in the Kingdom and judging the whole world physically. It must be remembered: Latter Rain theology does not believe that the Church will be raptured but will **be** the first stage of the Second Coming on earth. The two witnesses in Revelation 11, who had the power to send plagues and judgments on the earth during the Tribulation is the image necessary to grasp what Stevens is getting at here. Unfortunately, Stevens still sees it in these terms, but a lot of his followers take it even in more literal way: for example, arming themselves in the belief that when the Tribulation comes they are to literally pass judgment on the ungodly (i.e., by shooting them).

That this extrapolation is not to be seen as just a paranoid reaction to a new teaching, is borne out by what Stevens called the Kingdom ministries: businesses and schemes that would *financially* enrich the Walk, making it one of the big money powers on earth. In other words, God was going to enrich the Walk so that it could compete with the satanic world system on its own grounds:

> And as far as money finances are concerned (the taxation system is so prohibitive now, you know), we keep loosing that mine in Nevada, but we ought to be dedicated to what it's going to mean. It's really moving along so rapidly that it's frightening. I can't tell you how well things are going; it's really going well. Now, when we produce this gold, where can we sell it? We cannot sell it to the United States: with all the

> gold shortage, the federal laws have been passed by Congress that gives one mining company the full monopoly, and they sell the gold to the government . . . . How many are beginning to see this mine, how complicated that thing has been? Well, God's going to break that![15]

This mine in Nevada that Stevens is referring to was part of the Kingdom ministries. In fact, this mine was purported to be the single most richest gold mine in the whole world, as well as world history. This mine was going to make the Walk the wealthiest power on the earth, able to compete with the Rothchilds and the Rockefellers. This mine was also one of the biggest con jobs ever put over on the members of the Walk. Many lost their life savings and have no financial security in their old age today, after a whole life of frugally saving their money. It is in this mine scheme that the demonic depths reached by John Robert Stevens as the result of his disobedience and unrepentance is manifested most clearly.

Notes:

1. Ex-Walk member and pastor (1954-1966: who wishes to remain anonymous), in private interview with Woodrow Nichols (24 OCT 79). Transcript on file at SCP.

2. R.D. Cronquist, private interview with Woodrow Nichols (1 DEC 79).

3. John Robert Stevens, "The Realm of Spirit," *We Came to the Feast* (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 17 OCT 70), pp. 100-102.

4. Ibid., "Bless-In of the Feast," pp. 107-110.

5. John Robert Stevens, "Signs in the Physical Body," handout to the School of Prophets (no date), p. 1.

6. John Robert Stevens, "Ministry School: Signs and Gifts," handout (no date), p. 2.

7. John Robert Stevens, *What Is A Bless-In?* (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 1972), pp. 10-11.

8. Ibid., p. 7.

9. John Robert Stevens, *Digging the Wells* (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 1969), pp. 2-3.

10. John Robert Stevens, "The New Step Into the Day of Revelation," Living Word Tapes (14 DEC 72).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

Chapter Eleven:

Silver and Gold Have I None

The Setup

Following the Split of 1967, the Walk entered a fruitful period of rapid expansion. A huge influx of new members, especially in the Valley Church (largely young people of the Jesus Movement), were trained in spiritual perception and warfare (the first **School of the Prophets** was held in 1979). As the Walk expanded, many members came into their ministries and the Walk entered into the phase that Stevens had always dreamed of: a restored New Testament Church that would usher in the Kingdom of God. Of course, now that there were more than just one apostle (all of the apostles together were referred to as the Apostolic Company), Stevens took on the designation "Apostle of Apostles," making sure no one doubted his supreme role in the eschatological drama.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the problem that plagued this expansion the most was that of finances. Millions of dollars were necessary to spread the "living word" and free the Apostolic Ministry to bring in the Kingdom. Two ministries (Kingdom Ministries) that were set up at this time were a paint roller factory in Santa Fe Springs (Impact, Inc.), and a mobile home factory that folded (many members of the Walk lost money in this venture). The Kingdom ministries were set up to make profit to finance the world mission of the Walk. Impact, Inc. has been the only successful operation that was funded through loans and donations of the membership. Over a million dollars was lost in a gold and silver mine scandal that took place in the early Seventies. In the beginning, John Robert may have been naively taken for a ride by the originator of this mining venture, Paul Holder, but evidence that we will shortly present shows that he soon became a conscious partner in fraud. The question is, of course, how was he able to keep the members of the Walk funding a mine that never produced an ounce of gold? The whole system of the Walk – its beliefs, teachings, and self-righteousness – made this possible. A step-by-step analysis of this fraudulent enterprise should make this clear to everyone.

According to the official Walk history, Paul Holder was given a vision of the mine in February, 1953, after a time of fasting and seeking the Lord. He was given a burden for financing God's Kingdom and saw, in the vision, a gold mine in a valley: "The Lord impressed me with the fact that through this property I would be instrumental in bringing God's kingdom on this earth."[1]

Holder spent the next nine years pastoring a church in Portland, Oregon, and wheeling and dealing in business enterprises that made and lost him fortunes at a time, especially his ventures into real estate from British Columbia to California. In the early Sixties, an old prospector showed him some land near Las Vegas and he immediately recognized it as the place in his vision:

> I sensed the presence and the anointing of the Lord. I then began to understand God's purpose and direction more clearly and immediately began to acquire the property that was available for claims . . . . At this time (around 1963) some friends introduced me to Bill Maybe who was then a pastor of a small church in Modesto, California

> [Bill Maybe would later become one of the biggest leaders in the Walk] . . . . When I got there he said he was involved with a man by the name of John Robert Stevens and my heart leaped within me.[2]

Of course, his heart had every reason to leap because John Robert Stevens and his Walk would keep Holder rolling in the green for the next 11 years. Holder, after meeting Maybe, went down to South Gate as soon as he could and attended Grace Chapel where he made his burden known during personal ministry. Three of the elders there assured him that God had called him to a ministry of finance "and that God would bring a great deal of money into my hands for use in His kingdom."[3] These prophesies proved to be partially true: a lot of money went into his hands but none of it was used for God's Kingdom.

Holder, however, did not settle down into a normal Christian life at Grace Chapel. Until 1971, he was still wheeling and dealing all over North America, constantly getting in touch with Stevens to get permission to enter into another enterprise. It is not clear how many of these enterprises were funded by members of the Walk, but one thing is clear: by 1973, over one million dollars had been funneled to Holder and disappeared without any profit or material return. How could this be?

In 1971, John Robert Stevens' son-in-law was admitted into the practice of law. The same year Holder, Stevens, Steven's daughter, and Richard Helphand (Stevens' son-in-law) formed Western Ore Reduction Corporation in Carson City, Nevada. Holder was the president; Helphand was the vice-president; Helphand's wife (Stevens' daughter) was the treasurer; and Stevens (keeping his usual low profile) was on the board of directors. From this moment on the burden of the mine was shifted from being mainly borne by Holder to everyone in the Walk. It takes no genius to make the connection between this burden and the fact that Stevens and his family had a lot to profit by the union of free enterprise with church financial support. All that was needed to gain the support of the congregation was the right bait. John Robert wasted no time in baiting his hook.

The Hook

The hook (or bait) needed was given in a series of prophecies and ministries as well as two or three slickly presented pamphlets issued by Western Ore. According to, "To Take the Kingdom," concurrent with Holder's 1953 vision, prophecies were being made in Grace Chapel that indicated that God was going "to bring great wealth to His people so that the Apostolic Company could carry the gospel of the Kingdom to the 'ends of the earth.'[4] This piece of propaganda gives a history of world economics, placing Holder's mine within a salvation-history framework. Thus, the members could plainly see that the "Kingdom Mine" was part of God's divine plan for the End Time:

> Kingdom Mine is located about 75 miles northeast of Los Vegas, just off Salt Lake Highway. In addition to being one of the richest gold deposits in the world, it has some of the world's best farming soil . . . . .Before long, Kingdom Mine will be Kingdom City. It will have all the facilities to be completely self-sufficient . . . . If we

> are to avoid the "mark of the beast" and still survive to do God's will we must be completely self-sufficient.
>
> However, even more than just a means of financial support, this mine is intended in the perfect will of the Lord, to be instrumental in bringing the downfall of Satan's control over the monetary systems of the world. This will be the first time since the Garden of Eden that key resources have been part of the Kingdom . . . .Yet with all this, there is still the confirmed word of the Lord that the Kingdom Mine is in His perfect will; that He has spoken and ordained that it should come forth now. This seemed to be a stalemate until the Lord began to reveal that He would do it through His own people . . . .
>
> What it boils down to is this: the Kingdom Mine is just like any other ministry: its lifeblood depends completely upon the sustained faith, prayers and support of the entire Body. Just as with the printing ministry, the tapes, the video ministry, the buildings, the camps, the Apostolic Company, or whatever, it is the continued sacrifice of the saints that brings it forth. What is needed right now, in addition to constant intercession, is the money and equipment to put the pilot plant into operation.
>
> There has been considerable prayer and fasting, waiting on the Lord, and counsel with the Apostle and Elders of the Body. As a result, rather than taking offerings [which would be illegal], we are making available what is called limited partnership. Its purpose is to encourage and make possible substantial investments by members of the Body. These investments, of whatever size, big or small, will [sic] be returned with interest.[5]

In another pamphlet entitled, "The Conspiracy That Founded Our Economic System," the conspirators of Western Ore outlined the divine plan of the mine to the members of the Walk:

> We have been given the tools – spirit, soul, and body – and are being called to use them. Every level, every area must be sanctified. We are seeing Satan's hold on the financial being broken for the first time in history. But this breaking, this loosing of the silver and gold into the Lord's storehouse is a function of the whole Body of Christ. This is because it is Christ Himself who is bringing the judgments; not just the Apostle or the Mine. Therefore, as in any ministry, we have been called to participate with whatever tools we have been given. If we have the gift of faith, we pray and intercede constantly. If the Lord has given us talents and abilities, we use them for His work. If He has blessed us with finances, we use them as He directs. In every case we use His tools for His work in the way He directs.
>
> The Mine ministry is a part of the Body that has been commissioned to speak the judgments [sic] on financial Babylon and bring the silver and the gold back into the Lord's storehouses. We can't do it alone.[6]

Unfortunately, quite a few members felt led by God to donate large sums to Western Ore. During the years 1971-1973 alone, over a million dollars went down the drain in scheme after scheme that Holder cooked-up supposedly to finance the equipment necessary of the magnitude to work the mine. Finally, in 1973, even Stevens began to worry about things, since Holder had gone backwards instead of forwards. He commissioned his son-in-law, working in the Criminal Division as a deputy district attorney in Los Angeles, to investigate Holder (it could have been, of course, a tactic to wrest control of the mine [he was still the president] away from Holder so that it would be totally in the Stevens' family, which would tend to prove that Stevens believed that there was really gold in it – the deceiver being deceived himself).

Helphand ordered Holder to submit a resume to him, explaining the circumstances of why nothing was happening. Meanwhile, Royal D. Cronquist, pastor of Coniah Chapel in Chula Vista, hurried home from the summer camp ministry meetings in Hawaii (which Stevens had been teaching) to go through the books in Los Angeles. Cronquist church was the largest money donors to Western Ore and he was afraid that his flock had been fleeced. He found nothing wrong in the books and called Hawaii to tell Stevens that all was right and that it appeared that Holder was honest. This did not go over well with Stevens. From that moment on there was conflict between Stevens and Cronquist. The only possible explanation is that Stevens was attempting a coup against Holder. It ended up backfiring in his face.

On 11 JUL 73, Helphand wrote a letter to the pastors of the Walk explaining to them the reasons behind the investigation of Holder. Things must have been getting serious from the tone of certain parts:

> In order that there be no deception in the minds and spirits of the Body, we have all agreed to divest ourselves of our stock interest in Western Ore Reduction Corporation. My proposal is that a trust be established and complete control over the stock be relinquished to the trustees of the trust . . . . The second thing that is being done is the formation of a council of three prophets and ministries to oversee the entire operation, past, present and future, of Western Ore Reduction Corporation . . . . The purpose of this survey is definitely not a witch-hunt. Brother Stevens has made it perfectly clear that because he has now called for a survey or an investigation, he is not intimating by that, that he sees wrongdoing or mishandling, willfully or unwittingly, in any aspect of Western Ore Reduction Corporation . . . . Of course, our overriding concern is the entire legal structure of Western Ore Reduction Corporation and its relationship to the Living Word, Inc.[7]

This last point is, of course, the most important. Living Word, Inc., was a non-profit religious organization, while Western Ore was for profit. There was a large-scale transfer of funds going on between the two. It was, to say the least, highly illegal. But, because of the potential rewards, it was well worth the risk to Stevens and Helphand.

However, Holder was not to be intimidated by any deputy district attorney, especially when that party was just as guilty as he was of misappropriating church funds. In his resume of 20 JUL 73, Holder ended with what is essentially a threat, informing both Helphand and Stevens that any action against him would be detrimental to all parties concerned:

Problems: With reference to progress or lack of progress in Western Ore, the real serious problem has been not so much a lack of decision but a wavering in the decisions after they have been made. These decisions would be reversed. I would be instructed to stop. Then it might be a day or days or weeks before another conference would be available to sit down and then get a go-ahead again either on a new plan, revised plan, or the same plan.

The second serious problem has been that when I would give reports to Brother Stevens, either verbal or written, there was a tendency for things that I said to be distorted. In fact, this grew so serious that I ceased giving him verbal reports only but this did not eliminate the problem.

Problems Concerning Finance From The Body: If the Securities and Exchange Commission becomes aware of the fact that we have taken a million dollars or more from the Body they won't consider the fact that this is a church and all within one family. It will be a violation of the Securities and Exchange Commission regulations and each one involved will be subject to very serious penalties. I am certain that some legal structure can be devised to prevent this eventuality.[8]

The Sting

The above infighting was going on simultaneously with the formation of National Mint Corporation, a silver refinery operation set up to raise money to purchase the equipment needed for the gold mine. This had begun on 17 MAY 73, when Paul Holder had come to Cronquist's Coniah Chapel (with the blessing of John Robert Stevens) in order to raise money for Western Ore. He presented the congregation with a three-fold scheme for investment:

1) to buy equipment and lease it to Western Ore under a limited partnership (Holder's favorite money scam), or (and he was being overly generous here) a separate partnership.
2) to loan directly to Western Ore under a limited or separate partnership (it should be noted that a loan of this type would make the loaner just as liable for failure as Holder).
3) or to loan money for a "silver inventory"; which meant that they could loan money to another "new" corporation that would fabricate silver bars, the profits which would be designated for Western Ore.

In this way, the members of the Walk would directly contribute in financing the gold mine, which, according to John Robert, was the "largest deposit of gold, perhaps in the world."[9] To inspire interest, Stevens went on to claim:

There's enough gold that if it were possible to get water in there – this a problem we have solved in our area and our claims – we have water available – in fact an underground river – so it could open up – this is by many geology reports – but if it were possible to get water in on that strip clear over to St. George, Utah, you could get enough gold in a short time – you could retire every debt of every nation on the face of the earth. Do you realize that? Every national debt, including that of the

> United States could be returned in a short time from the gold that could be taken from that area.[10]

Most members of Coniah opted for #3 because they felt it was the safest (especially since over a million dollars already had disappeared) and by 1 AUG 73, they had raised $173,651.13.[11] Cronquist was still worried over the battle between Holder and Stevens for control of the mine and was concerned that the money raised from his church would go the same way as the previous one million dollars. He confronted Stevens several times over the money raised by his church and the lack of money Stevens was contributing out of his own pockets, especially since he was obviously not putting his money where his prophetic mouth was:

> "Brother Stevens," I said, "if you're not going to get involved with your finances, your assets, then I'm not going to get involved. If you don't believe that these words and directions are from God, then let's stop it right here . . . . If you're not going to get everyone involved, then I don't want to get Coniah's people involved." He said, "Alright, I want you to be in the Valley church tonight and preach this with me. I want to see how you will present it, and I want to send you throughout the churches with the message and we'll get everyone involved, and we'll put this mine over."
>
> That night Brother Stevens and I brought the message, "Serving the Purpose of God in This Generation."[12]

In fact, when the whole struggle began between Holder and the Stevens, the primary reason Cronquist flew to Los Angeles from Hawaii was to get the $173,000 out of Western Ore and into his own control. He discovered that Stevens was wrong about Holder spending all the money (this was the rumor that precipitated the crisis), but Cronquist still had the mind to confront Helphand about getting all of Coniah's money back. "So by the cooperation of Brother Holder, I got all of Coniah's money and silver out of Western Ore and put it in my name."[13] He did this just in time because when Stevens got Helphand to start the investigation against Holder, he put a hold on any further silver smelting or money executions. Since the price of silver was fluctuating at this time, many members of Coniah were losing a lot of money. This prompted Cronquist to ask Stevens if he could set up another corporation to get the silver operation back into action. Since the money had been already removed from Western Ore and put into Cronquist's name, Stevens agreed. Cronquist then formed National Mint Corporation in August 1973; Cronquist was the president; Gary Hargrave, Cronquist's assistant pastor (appointed by Stevens to be his inside man in Coniah) was vice-president; Cronquist's wife was treasurer. However, when Cronquist went to Stevens to get help to run the operation (all the equipment was in Sepulveda), he ran into unexpected trouble with Stevens:

> One or two weeks later, again after a Thursday morning service, I asked him [Stevens] for the men of Western Ore to work for National Mint. This was my first major conflict of direction from Brother Stevens. He was angry with me for establishing National Mint – he didn't remember consenting to it. After further discussion, he consented to John Hostetter and Mel Martin to work for us . . . . Shortly after this, I talked with Brother Stevens and he stated that he couldn't come up with more than $5,000. He didn't want to liquidate his properties because he had

> some doubts about this being God's will anyway. Yet I was still encouraged to take Coniah's money and follow the Word.[14]

Stevens had every right to begin losing faith (if he ever had any to begin with). Holder, showing that he would not be intimidated, formed another corporation of his own, Logos Mining Corporation, literally pulling the rug from under Stevens's feet. He was able to get away from this because Western Ore never really owned the property the mine was on. In fact, no one owned the property the mine was on. Holder had never really filed a claim on the land – just a 90 day "notice of intent to certify a claim" under sundry names (since it can only be done once under each name). In other words, the mine never existed to begin with. It was a big con job. Stevens was now out of luck, having only his prophetic living word to stand on. Since the money from National Mint was officially designated to go to Logos Mining Corporation (a corporation Stevens had no interest in) Stevens did everything he could to get control of National Mint. He did this through his control of John Hostetter (an elder at the Valley Church).

Hostetter was made the business manager of National Mint since the offices and vault for the silver bars were in the Living Word building (the fabrication plant was in Newhall). Hostetter and Mel Martin were paid on a contract labor basis only. Originally, the security measures at the Living Word building were strict, needing at least two men to enter the vault; the cash account needed two signatures; and an expenditure account that was not to exceed $5,000. However, Stevens had other plans. As Cronquist relates the events:

> So we continued the silver business and operation. John was a good man, but he entered into many contracts with silver sales organizations without very much consultation of the Corporation's directors, Brother Hargrave and myself. When he left the Living Word building, he changed the security stipulations of silver and money. One man could now get into the vault at any time alone. The overhead expense account was increased to over $25,000. They took themselves off contract labor and onto wages without any permission or discussion with the directors. These actions began to cause problems and suspicions.[15]

Concurrently with these new complications, Stevens was constantly telling Cronquist that he was no business man, telling him to turn the whole thing over to someone who was competent in business matters. Of course, he did not want Cronquist to do this without his opinion (after all, in the past, Cronquist had always consulted with Stevens before making a decision). However, Stevens did not take in to account Cronquist's feeling of responsibility towards those at Coniah. When he finally did sell National Mint (for one dollar), it was to the couple who had so far put up the most money, Ralph and Lorinda Halla. They took over in January 1974. However, immediately after they took it over, National Mint showed a loss of approximately $35,600.00. The Halla's were dumbfounded. According to the records, National Mint had showed a net profit of $75,000 on November 30, 1973. What could have possibly have happened?

What happened was that when Cronquist sold National Mint, John Robert's loyal servant, Gary Hargrave (who followed a strict Stevens' party line) was no longer vice-president and Hostetter was no longer the business manager. In other words, Stevens had now lost what little control he had in the first place. This is borne out by Cronquist's further account of the proceedings:

> When I told the Halla's that it looked like I had sold them a company with a large amount of missing funds, they became disturbed. They started asking questions. Then all hell started . . . . We corporately decided to get National Mint out of L.A., and down to San Diego, because things looked and sounded too shady. While this problem was going on, Mel Martin and Larry Steels stole all of our smelting equipment, lock stock and barrel, and John Hostetter had knowledge of this . . . They had stated that they had given all the keys to the smelting plant to Brother Halla. But when a couple of Coniah's men went up there to get the equipment, they found the smelting plant all locked up, but everything gone. They immediately called Brother Halla. Naturally, the only thing he thought of was to call the sheriff.[16]

This, of course, caused a great disturbance in the Apostolic Company. Stevens ordered Cronquist to order Halla to call off the sheriff, which he did. After further bickering it was discovered that the equipment was found in an elder's garage in Sepulveda. To make things even worse, the elder would not turn the equipment over to Halla until he had a direct word from Stevens. Finally, Hostetter called Stevens and got permission.

The Halla's hired a CPA to go over the books and it turned out that things were worse than they seemed. It turned out that National Mint had approximately $65,000 missing at the time the Halla's took over. As the Halla's relate the sad end of this affair in their study of "The Walk of John Robert Stevens":

> Although they were able to make some of it back [the $65,000 that were missing], the business had to close after a few more months of operation since Stevens urged everyone who had made loans to the corporation to withdraw their money [since the profits were to go to Logos Mining Corporation – i.e., to Paul Holder], even though he knew there was not enough left to repay them all. Again, people lost considerable amounts, losing much of their life's savings, which was particularly tragic in the case of the widowed, the infirm, and the aged.
>
> As in the mining project, Stevens and Cronquist [who eventually sided back with Stevens against the Halla's] "washed their hands" of the whole affair . . . . In fact, when the Halla's kept pushing Hostetter and Martin, especially about $2500 in cash given to Hostetter by Cronquist for which no accounting was ever made and about two 1000 oz. silver bars which were missing from the vault when the Halla's took over and other discrepancies, Stevens assured Hostetter and Martin that if the Halla's took them to court, he would personally provide the funds for their defense. This is included on the tapes of the meeting held on 16 May 1974.[17]

Stevens' guilt is so obvious it sounds like a replay of President Nixon's actions during the Watergate affair. All in all, there were two 1000 oz. silver bars missing and approximately 3400-3500 other ounces unaccounted for, which at the time, was worth over $65,000. It is interesting to note that Martha is attempting to get at least half of 3500 ozs. of silver in the safe of John Robert through her recent divorce. It is interesting to speculate on where this silver came from. In fact, Hostetter told the Halla's that he was under the impression that the profits of National

Mint were to go towards "blessing the Apostle," claiming that he had never been informed that it was to go to Logos Mining Corporation.

The only person to be prosecuted out of all of this was Paul Holder. He was eventually convicted of felony grand theft in June 1978 in San Diego for raising money for a mine that did not exist. It is humorous to note that the whole time the trial was taking place, John Robert was spending an extended sabbatical in Washington, Iowa. In fact, when the trial was officially over, he returned back to Southern California. The first meeting he spoke at after returning is recorded in the Prologue. This is why the congregation was so anxious to hear from their Apostle again. It might also explain why Stevens was under so much self-condemnation at the time.

Notes:

1. Resume of Paul Holder, submitted to Richard Helphand (20 JUL 73), p. 1.

2. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

3. Ibid., p. 3.

4. "To Take the Kingdom" (Sepulveda, CA: Western Ore Reduction Corporation, no date), p. 9.

5. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

6. "The Conspiracy that Founded Our Economic System" (Sepulveda, CA: Western Ore Reduction Corporation, no date), pp. 7-8.

7. Letter to "Dear Pastors," from Richard Helphand (11 JUL 73), pp. 2-5.

8. Holder, op. cit., p. 5.

9. "Ministry to Paul Holder," Ministries Conference in Seattle (12 SEP 72), p. 3.

10. Ibid.

11. From the files of Ralph and Lorinda Halla, final owners of National Mint Corporation (dissolved in August 1974).

12. Open Letter to John Robert Stevens and the members of the Walk, from R.D. Cronquist (5 MAR 74), p. 2.

13. Ibid., p. 3.

14. Ibid., p. 4.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 5.

17. "The Walk of John Robert Stevens" (San Diego, CA: Upper Room Ministries, 17 MAR 78), p. 18.

Chapter Twelve:

Loosing the Apostle

The Living Word Grows Forth

Between 1973 and 1977, the Walk went from 53 affiliated churches to 101. Perhaps the capstone came in 1973 when Stevens was able to purchase a large church in Anaheim, fulfilling the prophecy the Lord had given him in the early Fifties. This building became known as the Church of His Holy Presence and was so large, most of the Feasts began to be held there. In this same year, John Robert built a library behind the Living Word building in his private office to house the huge collection of books he had collected, mostly on the occult and metaphysics.

Jim Manley, from Coniah Chapel, helped build this library and had many conversations with Stevens in the process (Manley eventually lost over $60,000 in Logos Mining Corporation). Since Manley had minor experience in natal astrology, they found common ground for many talks on the occult. John Robert had vast quantities of books on astrology, witchcraft, rare esoterica (collector's books), the works of Aleister Crowley (greatest black magician of the early Twentieth Century), as well as books on salesmanship from the power of positive thinking school, hypnotism, and, of course, religious books.[1]

Manley had serious questions about a library full of so many evil books on the dark secrets of the devil. Stevens told him that it was important to know the enemy so that they could fight fire with fire, that is, to beat the devil on his own ground.[2] This is, of course, the classic black magic (using demons) – white magic (using benevolent spirits, i.e., angels) dichotomy. With this type of mentality it came as no surprise to Manley to discover that not only did Stevens believe in reincarnation, he strongly intimated that he was both the reincarnation of the Prophet Samuel and John the Apostle (who, as most Christians know, wrote the book of Revelation – a book that is even highly regarded in occult circles).[3] In fact, from a sermon that John Robert preached in the Valley Church on 15 DEC 72 (on day after his famous "The New Step Into the Day of Revelation" message; i.e., his trip into the future), he said:

> You've had misgivings about reincarnation. Forget them. Because whether you believe in reincarnation or not, that's been another Ishmael doctrine [one that has been perverted by Satan to discredit the real thing when it comes] that people have been turned off on. But the truth of the matter is, even the book of Revelation talks about the ones that come back that had power to bring – to shut up the heavens and so forth: the witnesses. While you can call them companies, nevertheless, it's talking about individuals.
>
> The Lord talked to His disciples, said in a few days, He said, "You'll not die before you see the Kingdom of God," or something like that. And in a few days they were on the mountain and there was Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. And Jesus was transfigured before them. And He called that the Kingdom of God. You'll see the Kingdom of God. That's what you're going to see. For the next little while, you're going to find visitations from the Cloud of Witnesses. Does that bother you? It

> shouldn't because they've been with you for a long time. That's right. And there will be some that God even sends back in the flesh again to fulfill a ministry.[4]

As any occultist or mystic knows, reincarnation is the main premise underlying all occult philosophy and Eastern mysticism, systems that are diametrically opposed to Biblical Christianity, which teaches the antithesis of reincarnation: the resurrection of the dead at the end of world who will be judged by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. It should come as no surprise, then, that Stevens made it a fundamental doctrine at the beginning of the seven year period preceding his glorification in 1979.

That Stevens was gearing up the entire Walk for the next seven years is made plain by the building of a huge farm complex in Washington, Iowa (where John Robert grew up) known as Shiloh. Large dormitories and a cafeteria were built to house at least three hundred people. It is largely believed in the Walk that the Word [the "manifestation"] of the Lord will shine forth from Shiloh (I Sam 3:21). In fact, in the Apostolic Directives [standing orders from the high command] it is stated that "Shiloh is the spiritual center of the world, the beginning of another age, the beginning of another dominion, the beginning of God's creation."[5] This should come as no shock to anyone who is familiar with the first mention of Shiloh in the book of Genesis: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."[6] In other words, the farm was given a central eschatological significance by its name alone, signifying that it would be the place where the "manifestation of the Sons of God " would take place, the place where the sceptre of judgment would go forth. By conservative estimates, Stevens raised over three million dollars for the completion of Shiloh.

For once (considering the previous investment failures; i.e., the gold mine), the money actually went to the project, largely as the result of the efforts of the pastor of the Washington, Iowa, church, Fred E. Bickhart.

But while the Walk was growing by leaps and bounds, all was not well in some areas. One case in point was the church in Waukeegan, Illinois, known as Ecclesia Fellowship, pastored by Robert Graham (incorporated in 1971). In 1975, Ecclesia split off from the Walk, telling Stevens that "they were no longer going to preach or follow my writings and teachings."[7] Graham pulled out largely over concern of John Robert's central role, dismayed at the fact that some members were virtually worshiping him. He was also dismayed over the teachings on transference, bonding, and widespread drunkenness among the leadership.[8] Doug Grills, the pastor of Antelope Valley (who asked Stevens if the Walk was in the occult – see chapter 10, "A trip Into the Future"), withdrew from the Walk a year later. However, as the Walk entered 1976, the mid-point of the seven year period, the members were filled with so much eschatological fever, most people never thought twice about the "Christ-like" role Stevens was playing in the drama.

Talmai: That Son of Anak

By March 1976, the excitement was reaching its peak: there was only one more month to go until Passover, the beginning of the Mid-Tribulation period (Stevens might deny this, having essentially denied the traditional dispensational framework; however, he never bothered to quiet

any of the rumors circulating in the churches that were associating this seven year period with the last week of Daniel 9). Stevens, in a sermon in the Santa Barbara church (The Church of the Living Word, composed primarily of Westmont College Students; Stevens had virtually tried to take over Westmont prior to this), entitled, "The Threat Within," gave his classic message on the Nephilim, the satanic spirits who had infiltrated the Walk (the leaven) and needed to be purged. That he encouraged the people to associate the time they were in with the seven year period (the traditional interpretation of the references in the book of Revelation to the divine judgments, otherwise known as the Great Tribulation) preceding the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, is made clear by the following quotes:

> Much of the book of Revelation has already been fulfilled, but people have not known it . . . . If only we could understand we're right now on the threshold of the Kingdom coming forth. It is not necessary to look to the future for the fulfillment of many of these prophecies [this might interfere with their acceptance that it was happening right then]. It is also historically true that the Antichrist came forth in the papacy, and he was recognized as such many years ago. Nearly all of the book of Revelation has come to pass. We're facing right now, I think, the final battle, in which if you have traced and understood the battle of the ages, they've always been mingled in – even in Old Testament times – with certain demonic forces, and what we call the Nephilim spirit . . . .
>
> So, whether you have the son of perdition, false Christs, false prophets, Antichrist – you have the spirit where Satan is trying to bring forth his sons to frustrate: sons, in the only sense that he can.[9]

He went on to explain that Satan is using the Nephilim spirits, his sons, to imitate the coming forth of the "manifestation of the Sons of God." Most of these "sons of Satan" operate through the traditional churches and try to infiltrate the Walk:

> And when you begin to realize where the enemies of the Walk – it's not out in the world, the enemies of the Walk are to be found among them who call themselves Fundamentalists, and Pentecostals, and Charismatics. And yet, we are believing all that they believe, plus more . . . . So, it puts them just beyond the pale of sonship, and brings us exactly into the realm of sonship . . . . That's why they are eventually going to wind up in the army of the Antichrist . . . . more so than most of the modernists.[10]

And just in case the people are still missing the point of what he is getting at (since he never comes right out and lays his cards on the table, his preaching style mainly consisting of hints, clues, and codes, that can only be understood by those who have the "revelation"), he plugs them into a more traditional Fundamentalist eschatological framework:

> Yet, for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened. Now, we're living in that time. Now, this is the one thing we must watch, it has become very alive to us. As a prophetic community [a Westmont College type of phrase], we must have great revelation of the Spirit to see who is coming against us, and understand spiritual wickedness in high places.[11]

After preparing the ground, he tells them that the main theater of the war in heaven is during the services themselves. Thus, their violent, aggressive intercession is the way to get rid of the leaven, that is, any Nephilim triads that may be in operation during the service:

> So, we're struggling to come up into one thing. Amen. This is the truest thing that God has brought forth. It's a pure movement. Now, what'll we do: "Well, let's all get out and win souls and tell people, 'Come on in, we've got the real thing!'" No, no, no, no, no! It's not time to do that. It's time to give witness, but the time is to eliminate the corruption and the inroads that come in through the Nephilim spirits against us. This is the time to build our walls, to come into the immunity that God has been speaking about to us for several years now. An immunity that belongs to the people of God [i.e., perfectionism] . . . . We're praying, interceding, violent prophetic proclamation, praise, and intercession. It doesn't matter what type of worship we like, it's what's effective for us to thrust through. We've got to break through![12]

That Stevens is thinking more than just spiritually, thinking in terms of the whole political spectrum (in ways that have an amazing parallel with the type of thinking taking place in such organizations as the Moral Majority today) is revealed in the wind-up to this message:

> We are determined that we're going to have this. There isn't any doubt in our minds. Amen. Nor is there going to be anything but just the relentless pursuit after everything the enemy has to throw at us. Amen. We don't care. He comes at us one way, he's going to flee seven . . . . And we'll pursue him seven ways. Amen. When we defeat him as he comes against us in the church, and we break the Nephilim spirit, then we pursue him! We pursue him into the realm of politics and government [this was the bicentennial election year], and bring him down there. We'll pursue him into the realm of finances, and we'll bring him down there. Amen. We'll pursue him into the realm of sciences – we'll bring him down there. We'll pursue him into the realm of the arts, everything from pornography on up – we'll pursue him, and we'll bring him down there. And every arrogant thing, we're going to pursue after him, every place where he's planted his Nephilim. And they're going to be destroyed! Every place! Every place! Every place! This is the way the Kingdom comes. Amen.
>
> We pursue him seven ways, into all the seven realms of existence! Amen! Amen! Amen! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! You believe it with all of your heart! I can sense you're grasping a hold of it. Amen. Thank you Lord.[13]

This classic message set the stage for the Passover Feast, which took place in Anaheim starting 14 APR 76. The first message Stevens brought forth was perhaps, the greatest victory ever won in the Walk (all the victories took place in the spirit world), and it was entitled, "Talmai: That Son of Anak." This was an important meeting for another reason as well: it was here that John Robert officially inaugurated violent intercession as the means of bringing in the Kingdom. The person who kicked it off was Gary Hargrave (past vice-president of National Mint Corporation; Hargrave was also the leader of the intercession during the meeting of 9 JUL 78 in the Prologue):

> Hargrave: Amen. This shall be the time when the Son of God comes to birth! This shall be the time of deliverance for the house of God; for, yea, the firstborn shall be released! The firstborn shall be brought to birth! We proclaim the release of it tonight! We reach in! We reach in! We reach in to loose it![14]

This was followed by loud, aggressive, violent intercession that would make a college pre-game prep rally look unenthused. It is incredible listening to this tape at the high emotional level average people can be whipped-up into. That they were ripe in the power of their belief is borne out by the words, or better yet, the proclamations that were being pronounced:

> Another prophetic ministry: We proclaim this the Passover of the firstborn, in the name of the Lord! We proclaim this the Passover that sees the firstborn of the Sons of God loose! We proclaim this the Passover in which travail brings forth the "manifestation" of that thing believed for!
>
> We curse the Nephilim spirit, in the name of the Lord! We curse the Nephilim spirit that comes to displace! We curse the Nephilim spirit that comes to usurp! We curse the Nephilim spirit who comes in a pretension of power that's not his! We curse it in the name of the Lord! We judge it to the pit, in the name of the Lord! Its stranglehold on the Apostolic ministry is broken now! Now![15]

This proclamation was immediately followed by a chant that would make the hair raise on anyone who was not totally committed to the Walk – anyone who might not look enthusiastically enough so to be associated with or possibly suspected of being a Nephilim channel for a devil triad. The chant began at a high pitch and worked itself up to unbelievable proportions; it's similarities with the "Seig Heil!" of Nazi Party meetings not to be dismissed. At least 17 to 18 times in a row, the whole membership chanted: "We loose you!" This series was followed by an even more intense series of chants, at least twenty times: "Now!"[16] Then, as a preview of the soon to be established method of violent intercession, the organ came in and led everyone into singing in the spirit.

Soon, John Robert came to the podium and began his message. Even the great "Apostle of Apostles" himself was impressed with the psychic expectancy of the congregation:

> There's such a force of faith here tonight. And I sense that faith is very definitely focused. I have never seen anything like this in my life where the people have been brought to the same intensity with which I have walked before the Lord and sought His will [the Apostle was not about to be upstaged, of course]. I'm going to tell you something. I have spent several days seeking, oh, some time ago – some of you may remember – that there was a request that God seemed to lay upon His people that they should seek to know the name of the Nephilim. And I think there's been a growing concern about it . . . . I've spent – I would suppose – the better part of the last seven days in this matter alone . . . . So, you can begin to understand why, as we're approaching the Nephilim, that the Holy Spirit has indicated that the whole theme of this Passover should be the judgment of the gods . . . . the judgment of the gods of

> Egypt . . . . the Nephilim that have brought the children of Israel under slavery and domination.[17]

In the Old Testament, the Passover preceded the Exodus, to be interpreted in the context of the Walk, as the "loosing of the Apostle" into the Kingdom. In other words, the first step in the "manifestation." He reminded the congregation of what took place ten years earlier, when through revelation, Stevens and the Walk broke the hold of Ahiman (this was the case of the yogini in Grace Chapel of South Gate, revealed to Stevens by the ex-witch). As then, so during the Passover, Stevens had had the name of the proud, arrogant Nephilim that was currently hindering the Walk from entering into the firstborn fulness of the "manifestation":

> Now, where are we right now? Well, I think we're up against Talmai, and I believe this is the one we've been fighting . . . . one of the sons of Anak. Now, it's an interesting thing. Talmai has a way of being reincarnated, or shall we say that the spirit comes back from generation to generation because it's a very high principality and it proceeds to fasten itself into the direct control of individuals to create a stumbling block, to create a hindrance to the people of the Lord . . . . Now, I'm pointing out something to you. I think we don't realize how in every generation, these things reoccur to some extent. But in this generation, I think another manifestation of Nephilim spirits has occurred. This is what we're facing, I believe. And I think we have stood to liberate the Apostolic ministry, to bind the Nephilim spirit, but that's only 50% of it . . . . Until you can name the devil, you are rather ineffective, for Satan can be entrenched and he has a degree of immunity as long as he is incognito . . . . Now the word Talmai, uh, let's see; you said it meant "strong spirited, but – bold, arrogant." Strong's Concordance says it's "rigid," or it would mean that it comes on strong in spirit. It's an arrogance that comes in Talmai. Talmai is the arrogant spirit that comes against the people of the Lord to frighten them, make them back off, put them constantly on the defensive, make them feel like that they are nothing in the sight of God or anybody else. And if there's one thing, one spirit that Satan would employ at the present time against the Sons of God, it would be Talmai [this is also a perfect description of the entire post-1951 ministry of Stevens]. Talmai would come to convince you that you cannot be a manifested Son of God. You cannot break through to the greater works [John 14:12]. Or convince you that you are nothing.[18]

Having established his case, Stevens now moves in for the kill, the literal kill: the judgment of Talmai, consigning him to the pit by the authority of his Apostolic office:

> But, I'm telling you, the Kingdom of God is suffering because I'm not free yet to move out. I want to be free to move. I want to be free to go. I want to be free to do the thing God has said to do now. I want Talmai destroyed! Judged and destroyed! Will you join with me in it? [congregation responds with loud "Amen!" after every Apostolic judgment] Amen. We've been vehement in our faith, in our violence, so we say it very simply: We bind Talmai to judgment and to eternal hell! [Amen!] We judge him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! [Amen!] . . . . Not only Talmai, but every one of them shall be named. Every one of them shall be named! Every one of them shall come down! They shall be destroyed! Even as the Lord of hosts destroyed

> Ahiman through the prayers of faith, so let it be with Talmai! Amen! [Amen!] I believe it's that simple. It has to be that simple. It has to be that simple. Because it is our destiny to see the world, the heavens, rid of the demonic forces that stood against the people of God. That's our destiny . . . . Ahiman is gone. Talmai is consigned to the pit! Amen. We take victory, in the name of the Lord! Amen . . . . I think we have broken the spirit of the Anakim that have risen up. And I think they're very closely identified with the three frogs of Revelation [that come forth near the end of the Great Tribulation: Rev. 16:13], the evil spirits that come out over the world [Stevens is not sure, but he thinks the third Nephilim is Sushai]. I've not had any confirmation of that, except just a witness. These are the three spirits that come with a diabolical, deadly force to come against the people of God.[19]

But having pronounced the judgment himself is not good enough for John Robert: he wants the whole Walk to join him in his ministry. He will impart the authority directly to them to do the same: to pronounce judgment:

> I'm going to proclaim this: I proclaim . . . . that there rest upon each member of this body the authority to bring the judgment into full execution! I proclaim that you are anointed, you are commissioned, you are authorized – you have the authority by the name of Christ – to speak the words of judgment against everything! Everything that riseth up against thee, thou shalt condemn! Every tongue that is loosed against thee, thou shalt condemn! I say it, whether it be by word, or whether it be by thought, that it shall be effective in your life! Amen. It will be effective. You're going to walk in it in the name of the Lord! Amen! Amen![20]

A purer system of works-believism has yet to be imagined than the one John Robert had just proclaimed. Of course, the people in the Walk were exuberant. The Apostle had just given them the authority they had been lacking to bring about the "manifestation." If they hadn't gotten the point yet, they might be fortunate to catch on later: every time something proclaimed did not happen, it would be because of their inability to believe it into existence. A better example of works versus faith would be hard to find.

The Shaking at Shiloh

The eschatological fever was kept finely tuned throughout the summer of 1976, reaching its watershed at Shiloh on 7 AUG 76.

During a series of meetings held over the sweltering humid Mid-Western summer, it was revealed to the leaders that not only was there only ***one*** real Apostle for the Kingdom Age (even though there were other Apostles in the Walk, Stevens was still the only one who counted when it came to loosing the "manifestation"), but on this memorial day, he was given a new commission. To understand both his first and second (his new one) it is necessary to review Hebrews 12. This chapter begins with the famous "Clouds of Witnesses" passage, goes on to discuss the chastening God gives to His sons, and the gathering of the saints at Mount Sion, to the heavenly Jerusalem: to the assembly of the firstborn; ending with the solemn warning of judgment to those who refuse salvation:

> See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.
>
> And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.[21]

Stevens is, of course, the one who speaketh. His word, according to the Walk,has shaken the earth. Now it was time for him to enter into the heavenlies (loosed into the Kingdom plane of revelation) so that he could shake the heavens as well. This shaking of the heavens was his second commission. Some of the prophecies of this meeting (later referred to as "the shaking at Shiloh") clearly bear this out:

> **Gary Hargrave:** Brother Stevens, I prophesy . . . . that the commission that the Lord has given you to this point has been fulfilled and not one word has fallen to the ground, that the guidelines are established . . . . I just prophesy that every impasse that's stopped, that's hindered you from being able to impart it to us and create the instant "manifestation of Sons" after your own kind is going to be broken, that the fulfillment . . . . is because of a new commissioning that will rest upon you to be able to impart to men the Spirit that God has put in your heart. The guidelines will not just be tapes and literature, but it's going to be a living epistle known and read of all men.
>
> **Bowman Littleton:** . . . . He [God] has brought you forth as a first fruits, not only in the word, but in everything that you do and speak and everything that you live, He brings you into Sonship and it shall be honored by the Father, in the name of the Lord.[22]

Perhaps a word of explanation is necessary before Stevens speaks. At this time, in August, the midpoint of the seven years had already been reached. In the classical understanding of the book of Revelation, this occurs with the death of the two witnesses in the great city, followed by the war in heaven. So, in other words, this fulfillment of the first commission parallels the finish of the testimony of the two witnesses, who then are raptured into heaven, where, according to Latter Rain ideology, they then fight the war on a higher plane. As the two witnesses had the power to bring judgments and plagues on earth (shaking the earth), so they will be able to do the same in the heavenlies, bringing judgment on the powers and principalities in spiritual warfare (shaking the heavens, primarily through violent intercession: that is, front line hand-to-hand combat with Nephilim spirits). Outside of this frame of reference (which has to come through revelation to those in the Walk), this whole meaning is meaningless. Thus, the remaining prophesies take on added significance:

> **Stevens:** I believe this is true [that he has been brought into Sonship, having totally fulfilled his first commission]. I believe this is really true. I'm going to take faith for

something this morning. I have seen a lot of the word go forth in "This Week" [the edited pamphlets of his messages, spoken in the Walk assemblies], and the greater part of it has been the word that the Lord has given me. I've seen a lot of the word go forth by tapes. I saw three and half years of seminars given to the denominational ministers that turned and went into the Charismatic Movement [paralleling the 3 ½ year period in Revelation].[23] I have seen the Charismatic Movement itself take the literature and the teaching – ask for it. Even in South Africa, people who are absolutely opposed come around and beg Brother Swart, "What's the last word? What's the last thing?", so that they can take it and preach it even though they denounce the source [this is known as the *spermologos effect*, where another man's ideas are retailed by charlatans: a widespread phenomenon in all spiritual movements, including Neo-Pentecostalism]. Now I have faith that that word is a pure word from God. And, therefore, I commit that word, as the Lord said, "My word will judge men at the last day." I believe for this word to become the source of crisis in the life of every man who picks it up, every man who hears it, for God to bring forth a quick work in the earth. Amen. That men shall rise or fall by the pure word that God has spoken . . . .

John Miller: What you're saying is what's happening now in the spirit realm. The initiative, it's on us, the hearers of the word . . . . Now you're the one that God has raised up and you're the one that is speaking [referring to the speaker in Hebrews 12: 25]. It's Christ, the Word of God within your flesh . . . . I think this new commission's going to shake the heavenly realm also. It's a new commission that's coming and it's linked directly to the Kingdom of God . . . . It's a matter of Kingdom principles and we're going to see to it that we don't refuse him who is speaking.

Stevens: Maybe I could add a little word with that. I believe that word is right, and I believe that the word that God has given me is the Lord speaking to shake. But likewise, anyone who receives that word and it really becomes a part of them, as they begin to speak it they are in the same position. Just the position I'm in, that's the same position they're in . . . . We've been taught the divine order for the church, but what God is actually doing now, He's preparing us right now in these days of conflict for rule and reign later . . . . There were twelve apostles, but today it's not to see how many you can get . . . . Today, there'll be one Apostle of the Kingdom, just like that there's one body. One body, many members. There'll be one apostleship, but there'll be many that'll be participating in that full apostleship that will even exceed apostleship of the Church Age . . . . I'm going to prophesy if I may: can I prophesy a word of the Lord? . . . . The Master spoke this word, "You that have followed me, in regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, you also will sit upon twelve thrones," and so forth. "What shall we have?" they had asked. A hundred-fold! But it was contingent upon something happening. The exaltation of Christ has to result in our exaltation . . . . And I prophesy not only shall I walk in the release, but those who have had the burden, they also shall share the hundredfold. They also shall find their release made perfect. For there cannot be any release of any member of the body but we all feel free. Amen . . . . So, no matter what ministry it is that stands in the Apostolic Company, the release brings forth the glory of God in the

whole Body, the whole Body. I prophesy that this ministry that has been given to me today shall also be shared in its authority and power upon everyone that God has called to apostleship, everyone that He's called to a prophet's ministry, everyone that He's called to the Apostolic Company. This anointing shall also rest upon every elder, upon everyone that participates because this release cannot come to one without coming to all of us. The day of the individual has ended. It exists no longer. We function as a Body. We function as a Kingdom.[24]

The Year of Romans 8

By the end of 1976, Stevens was walking a fine line with his followers. The major first three and a half period of the Great Tribulation had passed, and still there was no "manifestation." He had to come up with something quickly or the enthusiasm of the previous Passover would diminish and he would both lose his opportunity to stay in absolute control (it must be remembered that a lot of the leaders submitted to him were men just as powerful in psychism as he was) and to have a real crack at being pressed into to the Kingdom through the focused belief of thousands of people (if, in fact, he still believed in his own teachings at this time, for which there is every reason to indicate that he still did).

Therefore, on the weekend of 11 & 12 DEC 76, the fourth anniversary of his trip into the future, there was another great moment of great expectancy as Stevens once again brought forth the living word:

> **Stevens:** Now, what are we doing? We're trying to reach to something in the restoration and in the Kingdom that is different. A step higher. Now watch this thing of everything going higher. I want you to get that. Divine order is not a matter of organization. Divine order is a matter of ministries constantly rising. It's of God that you're putting so much emphasis on praying for me. What you're trying to do is not create some leader out of me [since it was already a fact], you're trying to lift me up to a higher spiritual plane which has to be the one thing now that happens . . . . What we're reaching for is the highest plane of anointing to speak the word of God. The highest plane of prophetic utterance that we can find . . . . The Kingdom is a prophetic proclamation from God![25]

Having established what the Kingdom was and how to bring it about, it was only a matter of time before the Apostle of the Kingdom proclaimed it, bringing it into existence. This is essentially what he did in all three of the Los Angeles area churches during this weekend. The series of talks was centered on the basics of violent intercession, and how it was to be used to "loose the Apostle." There was, of course, concern in many people's minds that four years had gone by and there was still relatively no difference in the experiential lives of the people. There had to be a reason why the "manifestation" was being delayed. There was: it was because not everyone had the revelation of who Brother Stevens really was:

> **Gary Vincent:** There's confirmation for this: in February of this year, word came: "We've left the trenches," and Brother Stevens said that everyone in the Walk, every minister needs to be warned; every pastor needs to be warned to bring people into a

> revelation of Brother Stevens' ministry. Because that's the revelation of their ministry [this shows that in February, as the important first 3 ½ year period was drawing to a close, Stevens had already planned an excuse, just in case something went wrong]. And he was speaking this in regard to the release that if there is a delay, even if we don't believe for one, but if there is a delay, it's only to give everyone opportunity to be brought into the revelation of Brother Stevens's ministry, because that's the revelation of their ministry. And I speak that by way of confirmation in the name of the Lord . . . .
>
> **Stevens:** You've got to accept your position in it. You've got to believe anything that happens to me is happening to you. I was led by the Lord to proclaim on August the Seventh: I reserved the right on these prophecies, that anything that comes over me is valid for you too. I refuse the fulfillment on myself alone. Because of the oneness that I sense – we are one – and when we move in it we are not going to glorify men. There's not going to be any jealousy, any rivalry at all. Amen.[26]

In the twinkling of an eye, Stevens had changed the whole format. He was not about to be pressed into the Kingdom until everyone was ready for it. In other words, not only did this absolve him of any responsibility for failure (it would not be his fault if they were not entirely ready; it meant that they had slacked-off), it also made him appear to be a heroic figure: he was forgoing glorification (the firstfruits ministry) in order to insure that not one of his flock perished. The great shepherd was willing to sacrifice his own glory for his sheep. But, just in case this may still prove to be too much of a disappointment in most people's minds, Stevens made their hearts leap in joy by telling them that the time of judging the world system had begun. 1977 was destined to be the year of the "manifestation of the Sons of God," or as Stevens referred to it, the "year of Romans 8." This gave the Apostle of the Kingdom one more year to either come up with something new or hopefully, bring off the Kingdom by the sheer power of their belief. On Sunday evening, at Grace Chapel, Stevens announced the End Time judgment, beginning with a reading from Isaiah 66:16: "For by fire and by His sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many." Next, he jumped to the famous inaugural address given by Jesus in Nazareth, recorded in the Fourth chapter of Luke, where Jesus quoted from the first few verses of Isaiah 61:

> **Stevens:** Then He folded up the scroll and He handed it back to the ruler of the synagogue, according to the Fourth chapter of Luke. When He did this, He had stopped – He had stopped reading the greatest passage on the restoration and the Kingdom that we have in the Scriptures . . . . But he stopped reading just after He said, "This favorable year of the Lord I'm proclaiming." And the next word, "And the day of vengeance of our God": but He didn't read that. It was not the time for its fulfillment. *But I read it to you because today is the time!* [Italics added] Amen . . . . It's the day of vengeance of our God.[27]

If this did not open up the eyes of those members who had not yet had the revelation of Brother Stevens' ministry, it is doubtful that anything would. The parallel to the ministry of Jesus Christ is not mistaken. After all, according to Latter Rain ideology, the "manifestation" will be the second coming of Jesus ***in*** His saints. He is no longer an individual. He is the Walk. Since John

Robert Stevens is the head of the Walk, the Apostle of the Kingdom, the Apostle of Apostles, he is literally the mind of Christ, the Word made flesh, the Living Word. Having announced his intentions, he then went on to officially proclaim (under his authority as the Apostle of the Kingdom) the End Time Judgment:

> We are not going to finish what we started today. We are throwing the door open. Today I was here because God called me to be a door opener. I've opened the door to the Day of Vengeance of our God. I proclaim that! I claim it by faith! Amen! I claim it by faith! By faith I proclaim it![28]

This was also the meeting where Stevens revealed the great Trilateral Conspiracy behind the presidency of James Earl Carter. This eventually led to the praying for the death of its founder, David Rockefeller. But not before placing the whole thing within its proper context:

> I don't care what mechanics God uses to bring down the Nephilim. I don't care what mechanics He does to bring to an end certain conspiracy interests in this country. But I'm going to tell you about them when I have absolute proof of each one of them, and we're going to end them. We're going to see if that Scripture was true in Isaiah 66, and it was true when it was prophesied over me when I didn't know anything about it. It's going to be true in its fulfillment also. We're going to see them come down.[29]

He then went on to explain the spiritual dynamics of praying for someone's death. He read to them out of Corinthians 5, where Paul hands over the incestual man to Satan. According to Stevens, Paul had the apostolic authority to slay by his word. Therefore, since he was the Apostle of Apostles, he had the right to not only slay by his word (i.e., his proclamation), he also had the right to delegate this authority to his followers by the direct impartation of his word:

> **Stevens:** I'm proclaiming the Apostolic judgment upon these Nephilim spirits that have hindered . . . . And in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, because this has already been judged, I commit it to you now to the executing Body of Christ [the Apostle proclaims, the Body executes]. That in the name of the Lord Jesus you proclaim this . . . . I proclaim it! I proclaim it in the name of the Lord! You – you execute it now! Amen. You execute it – you execute it with faith! Amen. I proclaim it in the name of the Lord![30]

This was followed up by an unbelievable burst of violent prayer, praise, and intercession. Once again, it was the voice of Gary Hargrave that dominated. As he pronounced the execution, his words were shouted back in an intensity that would raise goosebumps on all but the most stout hearted, believer and unbeliever alike:

> **Hargrave:** Hallelujah! Proclaim it with me! We release!
>
> **The Walk:** We release!
>
> **Hargrave:** The Vengeance of God!

The Walk: The Vengeance of God!

Hargrave: We release! . . . . The Vengeance of God! . . . . We release! . . . . The judgments of God! . . . . We release! . . . . The judgments of God!. . . . Right now! . . .

Bowman Littleton: The word says to Satan, the word says to the Sons of God concerning Satan: "Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter . . . . And this night the Seed of God comes forth by the living word against the seed of Satan, against the sons of Lucifer. We come against the sons of Anak. We come against Arba, the grandfather of Talmai. We come against the descendents of the Nephilim. We focus the Gun of God, the Word of the Lord. His are the judgments and we hold the sword that hews the Nephilim to pieces! . . . . The highest level of prophetic utterance is loosed tonight! This word tonight from this pulpit shakes every nation on earth![31]

A few weeks later, on 2 JAN 77, Stevens declared 1977 to be the year of the "manifestation," the "year of Romans 8" at Grace Chapel.[32] Twenty days later he held a workshop on violent intercession at South Gate, laying the theory for the coming "manifestation":

So, can you see, there's a war going on? Now, you say, "I don't go for the violence." You better go for it because this is a time of violence. It's a of time of travailing. It's a time of the Sons coming forth . . . . We're not working for a victory for me or a victory for you. We're working to bring forth the manifestation" of the victory of Jesus Christ. We are enforcing His victory. Amen. Amen. We're enforcing His victory. We're pulling the switch [like on the electric chair], because the sentence has already been pronounced on the Cross against demon power. We're throwing the switch to execute it. We're just agents in the hand of God, instruments in the hand of God . . . . We'll speak that word – we'll come into it [Hebrews 12:27] in the name of the Lord.[33]

He then went on to teach them the proper psychic techniques that were necessary to enter into the right frame of consciousness to do battle on the spiritual plane:

Keep drawing from the Lord, just draw – the old Bless-In style. Draw, boy, let us speak it! As soon as you feel that you have spoken that anointing into it, the "force" will be great. Draw some more. Amen. After awhile, you'll get so you can just continually draw, continually draw . . . . it'll become a way of life. But I can't emphasize too much you worship of the Lord, as standing there drawing from the Lord, praising the Lord, magnifying, send the Lord into the situation. Amen. Speak God into it! Amen. You can be effectively violent, effectively total in your expression if you have drawn more of the Lord in it. Amen.[34]

Of course, 1977 did not bring in the "manifestation of the Sons of God." Not many, but a few members left as a result of what they considered false prophecy. However, the dynamic of human pride being what it is (no one wants to admit they have been deceived, usually rather going along with the deception rather than admitting it), most of the people stayed in, choosing to believe Stevens' rationalizations that it was because they hadn't been faithful enough that the

"manifestation" hadn't come forth (see the Prologue for the 9 JUL 78 meeting where Stevens was still blaming the congregation for the failure). However, the biggest trial was yet ahead for John Robert: the end of the seven-year period. If, by the middle of December 1979, Stevens wasn't in the Kingdom, then his vision into the future in 1972 was verifiably false, and he was a false prophet. And that was not all. He still had another major conflict to face before this took place. In December 1978 his faithful wife, Martha, filed for divorce.

The Final Days

No one can really blame Martha for finally deciding to bail out of a relationship that, while maybe financially rewarding, was one humiliation after another. It is amusing to note that on the declaration that John Robert filed in response to Martha's (there was a battle over all the property – Stevens hired the same attorney that made a big name for himself in the Lee Marvin case), he totally denied his spiritual authority to the magistrates:

> 4. Petitioner [Martha] states that I am, in essence, the church. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have been and continue to be a vital ingredient to the development of the churches referred to herein, as I have spent tireless hours writing, researching, counseling, ministering, preaching and teaching what I sincerely and firmly believe is a distinct revelation of what the scriptures really mean [this "distinct revelation" is unfortunately diametrically opposed to the Scriptures; perhaps that is why it is so "distinct"]. We have taken these ingredients and tried to bring the Old Testament and the New Testament in harmony [after all, he was both the reincarnation of the Old Testament Prophet, Samuel, and the Seer, John – what better harmony could anyone ask for?]
>
> I do not consider myself "The Apostle" [a blatant bold-faced lie] or a direct "Messenger of God" as Petitioner asserts, but I do believe that I have been blessed as the beneficiary of certain distinct revelations.[35]

It is truly amazing that the Apostle of the Kingdom, who was given such authority over the worldly system, would bow his knee to the courts of "Satan" in order to win a worldly court case over worldly possessions. Perhaps those in the Walk would have second doubts if they knew how reluctant Stevens was to confess his divine office before men, unless, of course, they can rationalize the whole thing away by seeing a parallel with Christ's reluctance to announce Himself as the Messiah until He had died for the sins of the whole world and risen from the grave. (However, Christ never denied that He was the Messiah; and when asked by the authorities whether He was, He confessed it openly, leading to the accusation of blasphemy).

If the divorce wasn't scandal enough, along came Jonestown and hordes of reporters all trying to discover other potential Jonestowns in America. Shiloh was immediately singled out in Iowa, and Stevens had no choice but to open the place up to reporters and film crews (to deny them entrance would only have confirmed their suspicions), who attempted (mainly in vain) to associate the Walk with the Jim Jones cult.

In the Fall of 1979, on the threshold of his climatic trip into the future, Stevens and the Apostolic Company went on a "Big Trip" all over North America, visiting most of the churches affiliated with the Walk. It began in Washington, D.C., went up to Edmonton, Alberta (Canada), then down to Seattle, ending in the Bay Area. While the talk of the vision of '72 was deliberately downplayed in the last two years, it was still on most people's minds: "Will it happen like the Apostle said?" However, the whole time during the "Big Trip," Stevens was sizing up his empire, realizing that if he didn't stay on top of things, it would fall apart, most of the areas being run by men just as powerful as he. If he didn't enter into the Kingdom as announced, the main glue that held the empire together would lose its bonding power. Therefore Stevens decided to restructure the Walk, putting men that were totally loyal to him in trouble spots, removing the leaders he didn't trust, putting them in places where his bases were covered. He announced this restructuring on the day he was supposed to have been in the Kingdom, hoping that something on this scale would distract the people enough not to notice that nothing had essentially changed.

The meeting took place on 9 DEC 79 at the Valley Church. The people were once again pepped-up to a high degree of expectation, not having seen the Apostle since he embarked on the "Big Trip." He entered the meeting dressed in a gray, flashy suit, wearing an open-collared orange, white, and brown patterned shirt. His hair was long and moddish, his beard trimmed but still bushy, and wore tinted wire-rimmed sunglasses: he was dressed like the stereotypic Hollywood record producer, a perfect outfit for Southern California. It did not take him long to get to the point. "Your prayers have been answered," he said. "I believe I broke through!"[36]

A thrill of excitement ran through the congregation as Stevens explained that the next step was going to come not by teaching but by revelation and impartation. "We're in a position for the Manchild to be born and be caught up into a new level. I think you're ready for it."[37] He then announced his panoramic vision of restructuring the Walk, thirty-four changes in all. The most noticeable were the replacement of Fred Bickhart at Shiloh (Bickhart had put more into the building of Shiloh than anyone; perhaps this is why Stevens wanted to get him out of there; i.e., Bickhart was too much of a rival because he was possessive of Shiloh), the appointment of a new pastor in San Diego (R.D. Cronquist had pulled out and Stevens had initiated a law-suit against him trying to get control of Coniah Chapel in mid-1979), and putting Gary Hargrave (his most loyal disciple – raised and bred by Cronquist at Coniah – as his main Timothy) in charge of Com West, the ministry that controlled the Apostolic Directives in the West, one of the most prestigious posts in the Walk (in fact, Hargrave actually replaced Stevens as head pastor of the three Los Angeles churches on 1 JAN 80).[38]

Now that the Walk had been brought to the very threshold of the big break through, Stevens gave them a new chant: "I am frustrated: I am going to change" [reminiscent of the chant in the movie "Network": "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore"]. He told them that they had to expect severe persecution from the media, telling them that Channel 2 in Iowa wanted to film Shiloh for the first anniversary of Jonestown. "They're out for blood," he said.[39] He ended his message by telling them that the laying-on of hands would be the main way of imparting the revelation of the Kingdom and recommended that everyone purchase the new messages he gave on the "Big Trip," intimating that they were crucial for the understanding and preparation of the break through. Then, in a final note of encouragement, he said, "I've always been free; but I'm freer than free," letting them know that he had indeed broken through the final impasse (it is

essential to remember that since Stevens began moving in the signs ministry he was constantly plagued on the spiritual level).

In the weeks following this meeting, the Walk began saying that they were no longer the Walk – they had gone beyond that. Some were calling themselves the Kingdom. However, from this moment on, especially after what he was pulling at Coniah, most of the Walk leaders struggled against his restructuring. The pastor of the New Hampshire church (after a secret meeting with R.D. Cronquist) withdrew his church from the Walk.[40] There are now rumors that Fred Bickhart is attempting to take Shiloh away from Stevens. To those who have eyes to see, the Walk did officially end on 9 DEC 79 with the proclamation of its Apostle. Only, instead of breaking through into the Kingdom of God, it entered into the final, terminal stage of the strong delusion of the End Time.

There are also rumors circulating that John Robert has been going down to clinics in Tijuana, Mexico, for treatment of cancer of the prostrate. If his days are numbered, at least he will be able to spend them with a new wife. He married his secretary in 1980 after his divorce to Martha was finalized. However, even if he does die soon, like the ministry of William Branham, his tapes and publications and church offshoots (by whatever name they call themselves) will live on to plague Biblical Christianity until the Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead.

Postscript

The author, in an attempt at maintaining objectivity, patiently sought a private interview with John Robert Stevens for over two years. Even his father could not persuade him to do so. Finally, after the 9 DEC 79 meeting mentioned above, the author waited in the parking lot after the meeting until John Robert came out of the Valley Church to get into the van that would take him to the next service in Anaheim. The author approached him and identified himself, reminding him that he had promised to get in touch with the author but never did. The author explained that it was only fair that John Robert have a chance to give his side of the whole story, since there had been several allegations made about his integrity. He agreed to an interview and told one of the secretaries to arrange it for a future date. The author never heard a word from neither Stevens nor the secretary who took his name.

In one last futile attempt, the author called the Living Word building on 10 SEP 80 and talked to another secretary, stating that Stevens had promised him an interview and in an effort to facilitate it as soon as possible, he would like the secretary to record the conditions of the interview and relay them to John Robert as soon as he could. He agreed and took down the conditions, which were given by the author as thus:

1) that the author would be alone and that John Robert could have as many people with him as he saw fit.
2) that both the author and John Robert could record the interview, but the author would use only John Robert's edited version, unless it directly contradicted the version of the author's.
3) that the interview would be no longer than 60 minutes.

4) and finally, that all questions from the author would be submitted two weeks in advance of any date agreed upon.

The author could not think of more reasonable terms and hoped that John Robert would think the same. However, in a letter addressed the same day, the author was informed:

> Your recent request for an interview with John Robert Stevens, along with conditions of the interview, were received by John Robert Stevens. He will not give you an interview.[41]

Since the author made it quite clear to John Robert Stevens that his book was the only history ever done on the Walk, he can only conclude that John Robert Stevens has something to hide.

Notes:

1. Jim Manley, private interview with Woodrow Nichols (1 AUG 78).

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Valley Church Service, Living Word Tapes (15 DEC 72).

5. Apostolic Directives (6 AUG 76).

6. Genesis 49:10.

7. John Robert Stevens, declaration in divorce papers as filed in Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, case no. D973296 (6 DEC 78), pp. 3-4.

8. Robert Graham, private telephone interview with Woodrow Nichols (24 OCT 79).

9. John Robert Stevens, "The Threat Within," Living Word Tapes (11 MAR 76).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. John Robert Stevens, "Talmai: That Son of Anak," Living Word Tapes (14 APR 76).

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Hebrews 12: 25-29.

22. "A Kingdom Commission to Brother Stevens," Living Word Tapes (7 AUG 76).

23. This is a crucial point to grasp about the widespread influence of John Robert Stevens in the Charismatic Movement. While many of its leaders are not associated with the Walk in any way (some even condemn it as

Spiritualism), still many of them still anxiously wait for his new messages on the tapes. Many of them secretly adhere to the secret doctrine of the Walk.

24. "Kingdom Commission...," op. cit.

25. "The Basics of Intercession, #5," Living Word Tapes (11 & 12 DEC 76).

26. "The Basics of Intercession, #6," Living Word Tapes (11 DEC 76).

27. "The Basics of Intercession, #8," Living Word Tapes (12 DEC 76).

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. John Robert Stevens, "We're In a New Dimension," Living Word Tapes (2 JAN 77).

33. John Robert Stevens, "A Workshop of Intercession," Living Word Tapes (22 JAN 77).

34. Ibid.

35. John Robert Stevens, divorce papers, op. cit., p. 2.

36. John Robert Stevens, private transcript of Woodrow Nichols, recorded at Valley Church (9 DEC 79). Transcript on file at SCP.

37. Ibid.

38. John Robert Stevens, "Declaration of John Robert Stevens in Support of Order to Show Cause re Modification of Spousal Support and Related Matters," filed in Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, case no. D973296 (25 JAN 80), p. 6.

39. John Robert Stevens, Valley Church (9 DEC 79), op. cit.

40. R.D. Cronquist, private interview with Woodrow Nichols (1 DEC 79).

41. Letter addressed to Woodrow Nichols, signed by Scott W. McDonald (10 SEP 80), p. 1.

Chapter Thirteen:

A Plausable Theory

Boromir stirred, and Frodo looked at him. He was fingering his great horn and frowning. At length he spoke.

> "I do not understand all this," he said. "Saruman is a traitor, but did he not have a glimpse of wisdom? Why do you speak ever of hiding and destroying? Why should we not think that the Great Ring has come into our hands to serve us in the very hour of need? Wielding it the Free Lords of the Free may surely defeat the Enemy . . . . Let the Ring be your weapon, if it has such power as you say. Take it and go forth to victory!"
>
> **"Alas, no," said Elrond. "We cannot use the Ruling Ring. That we now know too well. It belongs to Sauron and was made by him alone, and is altogether evil . . . . The very desire of it corrupts the heart. Consider Saruman. If any of the Wise should with this Ring overthrow the Lord of Mordor, using his own arts, he would then set himself on Sauron's throne, and yet another Dark Lord would appear."**
>
> --J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings.*

The question that is most obvious and which comes immediately to mind is: If John Robert Stevens had a genuine calling of God on his life; if God did indeed give him a vision of his ministry at the age of 14: if he was truly ordained to have an important End Time ministry, then what happened? Of course, it's impossible to know whether the account of his life is factual (since it is largely composed of his own testimony), there is no real reason to dismiss it (all things the author was able to check out were confirmed). In fact, the easiest conclusion to reach is that in light of the events that took place following the formation of the Walk in 1951 – the rip-offs, the alleged adulteries, the backstabbings, empire building, sheep stealing, etc. – it would be safe to deduce that the whole shabby career of John Robert Stevens was nothing but another version of the classic "Elmer Gantry" huckster, making merchandise of the people of God for an easy quick buck, as well as the satanic temptation of wielding godhood over an idolatrous flock. However, when all of the facts of his life are taken into account, this conclusion is not satisfactory. In fact, as far as the author is concerned, there is only one plausible theory that takes all of the events into account and still bears up under the harsh scrutiny of the Scriptures.

In an amazing parallel, the life of John Robert Stevens has so much in common with the life of Saul, first king of Israel, that if Stevens would have been the reincarnation of anyone, it would have been him. The life of Saul also answers a perplexing question that confronts many Christians who have put their faith in the human instrument rather than God: How can a man that has a position of authority in the church (given to him by God) be working for Satan? Saul was ordained to the kingship by God, yet disobeyed God so many times that God took his kingship away. However, almost 40 years went by (with Saul on the throne) before he lost this position, during which he actually tried to kill the next ordained king, David (who would not lift up a hand

against Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed). That this is perplexing just goes to show how much we limit God's Word and ways of doing things by our own understanding.

The first time Saul disobeyed was in the area of worship, usurping the priesthood (there was separation of church and state under the kingship) at Gilgal, thus incurring the anger of God. As a result he lost the opportunity of having one of his descendents reign eternally on the throne (I Samuel 13:13). Later, he once again disobeyed a direct commandment of God, sparing Agag, king of the Amalekites, whom the Lord had commanded to be destroyed. In fact, Samuel was to associate Saul's disobedience with the sin of witchcraft (I Samuel 15:23), the Lord rejecting Saul altogether from being the king of Israel (I Samuel 15:26). The real clue behind the spiritual dynamics at work following the continued disobedience of a man like Saul (Saul refuse to believe he had committed wrong, and only gave in after constant argument from Samuel, ending after the Agag affair: Samuel never seeing Saul again after that) is revealed in I Samuel 16:14:

> "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."

When God withdrew His spiritual support, even though Saul remained king physically, Saul's kingship was, in fact, brought to an end, the anointing of God's Spirit being replaced with a demon. Just because we now live in the New Testament is no reason to believe that God operates any differently today. We can see the tragic end of this spiritual struggle Saul had to face after this, when he, lacking any spiritual direction in his life, finding it impossible to get a word from God, went to the witch of Endor, in order to know the future. The spirit of Samuel came up from the dead and pronounced God's judgment upon Saul, and he perished the next day, along with his seed, at the battle of Mount Gilboa against the Philistines (I Samuel 28: 3-20; 31:1-6).

If we accept John Robert's testimony regarding his vision at age 14, when he received his calling, then we can use the Biblical account of King Saul to show what happened in the ministry of Stevens. The first sign of trouble in the ministry of John Robert Stevens was his absolute refusal to submit to any authority other than his own. Even Jesus, the Word made flesh, submitted to the authority of his human parents. The next major event is, of course, John Robert's direct disobedience of God, going to Tacoma after God had explicitly told him to stay away from the Latter Rain Movement (once again, we have to take his word for it, that God told him this). Immediately following this disobedience, Stevens began to move in the mediumship of physical "signs" in the body, pure hardcore demon-power psychism.

In another amazing confession, John Robert constantly related to the members of the Walk from the very beginning, that from the moment hands were laid on him at Tacoma, he never experienced peace in his spirit (one of the main reasons of intercession was to help Stevens break through the impasses that kept his life in constant struggle). In his publication, *Spiritual Warfare*, he states:

> I didn't learn that something aggressive was coming against me until the prelude came in the battle before I came into this walk. After hands were laid upon me and I came into the walk, I was aware of a spirit of tremendous assault. I became aware of a spirit world of activity, of warfare that I had never realized before.[1]

This walk he is talking about is the essence of the whole Walk itself. In other words, John Robert set up the Walk in order to wage war against the spirit that had been sent against him. Who sent it against him, and for what reason? It should be clear by now, that after constant disobedience, God withdrew his anointing from the ministry of John Robert Stevens and sent him an evil spirit, hopefully for correction, to lead him to repentance. But, as his predecessor before him (Saul), Stevens chose to completely misinterpret the events, denying the Scriptural judgment on occult phenomena, believing instead that he had entered into new revelation. Thus, if God had ever chosen to speak with him, or correct him, either through His Spirit, or through a human being, John Robert chose to see this as an attack from the Nephilim.

It is no accident that as Saul's disobedience led him directly into witchcraft (necromancy), so John Robert's led him eventually to the ex-witch. In fact, if Stevens's definition of the Nephilim Talmai (see Chapter 12, "Talmai: That Son of Anak) is correct, it just may in fact be the demon God sent against him: proud, arrogant, that comes against the people of God to frighten them, to put them on the defensive, to make them back off, to make them feel like they are nothing in the sight of God (he did preach against individuality). A better definition of the sum total of Stevens' ministry has yet to be given.

Stevens was tempted by the Ring of Power, and like all those who went before him, he was deceived and fell into great darkness, unfortunately, taking a lot of people with him.

Notes:

1. John Robert Stevens, *Spiritual Warfare* (North Hollywood, CA: Living Word Publications, 1973), p. 20.

Epilogue:

The End Time Apostasy

Jesus told His disciples that the End Time would be characterized by widespread spiritual deception, so that if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived. That can only mean that the deception will come from within the Church itself, "The Threat Within," as Stevens called it. We do not want to convey the idea in this book that the entire Neo-Pentecostal Movement is satanic. It has definitely made the more conservative denominations reevaluate their spiritual condition, especially in response to the genuine charismatic gifts that are still in operation today.[1] Therefore, it is only right to give a Neo-Pentecostal pastor a last word on the Walk. Robert Bradley, a member of the Walk in the Fifties and early Sixties, is a graduate of Fuller Seminary, and has, therefore, one of the best analysis of the Walk's role in the scheme of things, especially in relation to eschatology. The SCP interviewed Bradley on 10 JUN 77 and the following is an edited excerpt. His comments bear our deepest thinking and prayer:

> I see people like Stevens and others being manipulated by satanic spirits to bring an occult religious consciousness to people, for a preparation of the new prophets [the forerunners of Antichrist that Jesus predicted in the Olivet Discourse]. There's been some teaching I've read in "This Week" and papers they've put out, and some really fuzzy prophecies I've picked up here and there, but they're minimizing the Second Coming of Jesus: that the people in the Walk are going to be the instruments that will usher in a spiritual breakthrough. You know, it's so frightening in this sense, because that's undoubtedly, exactly the kind of thinking that's going to produce the Antichrist.
>
> But, at any rate, they've talked about wisdom that God is going to give of a scientific nature that's going to enable people in the Walk to have power in a very tangible, physical sense. And they're literalizing the Bible in this respect, and really talking about a tangible Kingdom in a frightening way. But instead of the Kingdom of our Lord as we understand it Biblically, it almost sounded like a political takeover – spiritualized, but none the less, "We're going to rule this world!" And I suppose you could take millennial thinking and put it into this kind of context, but there was something very obviously distorted about the whole thing. It was really shocking, because it was such a grubby motivation for serving God: "Serve God now, and get with the Walk, and believe me, and power and authority and influence are going to be yours!"
>
> The issue today, as always, has been the issue of when Satan came to Jesus. The way of the Cross as opposed to the way of power. Do we come into what God has purposed for us? Because the New Testament makes it pretty clear that He has designs for us in terms of this universe that are just mind-boggling. Do we come into it by direct route, in seeking spiritual power, and seeking influence over men? Or do we come into it by the way of the Cross? And it seems like the root, the essence, of every one of these false movements is that it's a road to spiritual development: "Develop yourself spiritually?" But the Jesus they preach is not the Jesus that Paul preached: he's not the crucified Jesus.

> Oh, they give it a little lip service, but it seems to me that that is the essential distinction.[2]

In a letter to the SCP, dated 1 APR 77, Bradley summed up the answer to how Biblical Christians should respond to the Walk and other false movements that make similar claims:

> Bold and persistent prayer, pleading the infinite power of the atonement of our Lord, and opposing His truth to the deception of Satan, is the key to the release of many who have been ensnared. In one sense, my brush with this movement is the most frightening thing I have ever experienced – on the other hand, it has settled me, sobered me, and helped me to gird myself for the conflict with deception which, with mounting intensity, looms ahead for the Body of Christ.[3]

Robert Bradley's words are not empty. His brother is still in the Walk. His faith and understanding are a lesson for us all. For in the final analysis, the Walk is exactly what John Robert Stevens has accused everything else not of the Walk of being: an *Ishmael thing*. The Walk is one of many movements sent by Satan to deceive the elect and to discredit the real End Time Movement of God when He ushers it in, not by the works of human hands. As He brought His Only Begotten Son into the world, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," so He will bring forth the "manifestation of the sons of God."

Our power of belief has nothing to do with it. It is ordained of God and will happen when the time He has chosen comes to pass. God is not a magic spirit to be controlled by the will of man, manipulated to bring about things if only we can believe them into existence. This is nothing but a different form of mind-science, Christian sorcery: Gnosticism. It is straight from the pit and will contaminate the very garments of all those who come into contact with it. We are commanded to flee from the works of the devil. To all those in the Walk: flee now, while there is still time!

If we are in Christ, if we have His Spirit within us, then we can be His disciples, growing not by studying techniques for developing psychic power, but by a life of patient endurance, by reading and studying the Word of God (the Holy Bible) daily; not by listening to tapes of the Apostle, or through studies filtered through human traditions and preconceptions, but by a life of obedience and righteousness, so that the *agape* love of God can flow through our hearts so that all men may come to know that we are Christians.

Perhaps it is best to close with one last quote from John Robert Stevens. In a tape, entitled, appropriately, "The Test of True and False Prophets and Teachers," Stevens makes this statement – a statement that has placed him under his own condemnation:

> This is again the test of a true prophet and of a false prophet: a false prophet has his own program, his own plan, and he goes about it in his own initiative . . . . A false ministry lays out its own plan and schedule and has a great deal of ambition involved....

> In the final test, there is only one way you can test: What do they produce? What is the fruit? What comes out of what they are; what they do? Is this important? Oh yes, this is important, because there is going to be so many things to deceive you; there is going to be so many things sent to deceive you.[4]

And if anyone ought to know, it is John Robert Stevens. A more fitting description of his own ministry is not to be found. As King Saul set up his own monument on Gilgal (I Samuel 15:12), so Stevens set his up at Grace Chapel of South Gate: his own program, his own plan and schedule, with a great deal of ambition involved. Thus, even though Stevens was called by God to the ministry, through disobedience and lack of repentance, he fell into great apostasy. And to those who believe that this cannot happen to a disciple of Christ, we have only the example of Judas to cite: he cast out demons, healed the sick, and tasted the powers of the Kingdom Age to come. Yet, tragically, he fell into irredeemable apostasy and perished in his sins – the son of perdition.

There are no shortcuts to glorification: "He that endures to the end shall be saved." The road is straight and narrow and few there are that enter therein.

Notes:

1. The author is convinced that with a few clarifications, the charismatic gifts of the New Testament are still in operation today. However, he believes that they are exactly what they are purported to be: gifts of the Holy Spirit, to be determined by Him when and where and by whom they are to be used, regardless of the beliefs of men or techniques invented to bring them into existence.

2. Robert Bradley, private interview with SCP (10 JUN 77).

3. Robert Bradley, letter to SCP (1 APR 77).

4. John Robert Stevens, "The Test of True and False Prophets and Teachers," Living Word Tapes (AUG 77).

Appendix A:

Physical Signs in the Body

The following list of physical signs in the body is composed of three separate handouts given to members of the Walk during the School of the Prophets, the school where they learn how to develop spiritual perception (i.e., psychic-occult power--ESP). The theoretical base of these signs is supposedly Scriptural, Stevens using his weird interpretation of the "quickening of the mortal flesh" in Romans 8:11, as well as Isaiah 8:16-18; Hebrews 4:15, 16; and I Corinthians 12:26-28:

TOP OF THE HEAD: Spirit reaching to God. This is where the human spirit is.

BACK OF THE HEAD: Emotions – pressure and tension in relationships to the Lord and people. If you get a pressure it's connected with submission to the Lord. A warm presence means submission is good.

TEMPLES: Heavy pressure means satanic invasion. Light pressure means you are anointed to absorb the word.

EARS: Warm feeling means God is speaking to them. Pressure means you are under a deceptive spirit.

EYES: Feeling across eyes means spiritual blindness.

GENITALS: Sign of creative life, God is going to bring forth something creative in your life.

HANDS: A pain in the palm means the work of the cross. A warmth in the palm is a sign of sonship.

TIP OF NOSE: A sign of burning means the person is a worshiper.

And so on, a sign for every single part of the human body. As one can easily see, the basis of these interpretations is purely subjective. In fact, they are not even the same on every sheet. Perhaps a note on the bottom of one of them sums up the whole thing: "If you have any question about a sign, forget it! Don't say *anything* if you are not sure." What more can be said?

Other than these physical signs in the body, Stevens also taught his disciples how to interpret auras. The following is a color key for discerning what spirit a person has by what color his aura is manifesting:

RED: Rebellion.

BLACK: Death (they are spiritually dead)

BROWN: Stubbornness, religious spirit

YELLOW: A sick yellow means perversion (either sexual or perverting the truth)

GREEN: Life giving

WHITE: Pure

BLUE: Heavenly

GOLD: Divinity (the presence of God)

PURPLE: Royalty

People in the Walk are constantly making signs with their hands, with their body, building up their auras to prevent psychic attack, blessing, drawing, bonding, etc. This, perhaps more than anything else, is the outward manifestation of their deception, not knowing the peace of God.

Appendix B:

Deprogramming: A Personal View

It is almost impossible nowadays to discuss the tragedy of the cults without mentioning deprogramming. It is the opinion of the author that other than removing the cult person from the immediate supportive environment of the cult, deprogramming is not truly effective in delivering a Christian from a misinterpretation of Scripture (of course, if a person is under total mind-control, then it is a different story). As Robert Bradley mentioned in the Epilogue, bold and persistent prayer, pleading the infinite power of the atonement of our Lord, and opposing His truth to the deception of Satan, is the key to releasing from the power of strong delusion. A classic case of this being true is the story of Patricia (Egger) Nichols. Patricia was in Walk for six years. She underwent three separate deprogrammings from the most famous deprogrammers of them all: Ted Patrick. Patrick was unable to break Patricia's faith in God's Word, since she believed that the Walk was completely Scriptural. It was only through the careful guidance of two ex-Walk members (Ralph and Lorinda Halla, last owners of National Mint Corporation), and another individual who knew the teachings of the Walk and knew how to show they were wrong in the Scriptures, leading her through the Bible, that she was able to understand that the Walk was occult, and that the occult was condemned in the Scriptures. Because she held a high view of the Scriptures, that is, because she believed they were God 's inspired Word, she realized that she had been wrong and from that moment, she was free from the strong delusion of the Walk. The following is a paper she submitted to one of her classes at the University of California at San Diego, shortly afterwards:

The Walk

by Patricia (Egger) Nichols

"The Walk." A very simple word. For us, it was short for "a walk with God," and for me, it was definitely the most influential experience of my life. I first became involved with the Walk at the end of my sophomore year in high school. I was new in town and <u>everybody</u> was going. Normally, that would keep me from going. However, a friend convinced me to come "just once" to see what it was like.

I was totally unprepared. At first it was pretty normal, singing songs and such. But there was also this thing they called "worship in the spirit." Everybody sang together spontaneously, all different yet blending together. Flutes, guitars and the piano played along. At times, one person would sing, solo at first, then with a flute or another person, with everybody eventually joining in again. It was all very beautiful and free, very different from the formal churches I had seen. The message was also different, pointing out the hypocrisy and the deadness in today's churches. I found myself agreeing completely with everything he said . . . .

I kept going back regularly, twice a week. It was challenging. You had a purpose greater than anything else existing on earth: to live a life totally dedicated to seeing the Kingdom of God come on earth. And I changed, gradually but completely, losing interest in everything else. I

didn't enjoy doing things with my family and dropped all my other friends and any social activities. Even when my parents started opposing the group and forbade me to go, it didn't faze me. Rather, I became more determined than ever. After all, we had been told that "the enemy" would do anything to keep us from walking with God. "And a man's worst enemies will be those of his own household." "Blessed are you when men persecute you and revile you and say all manner of evils against you falsely on account of my name. Great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets before you." Everything was happening just as they said it would.

In the beginning of my senior year, I was removed from school and sent to San Diego to be "deprogrammed" by Ted Patrick. However, he could not convince me of anything. No one could. I just waited, played their game until I could get out. After graduation, it was natural for me to want to move. The pressure from my parents was unbelievable; going to school was a waste of time, I thought.

So I moved to South Gate (in Los Angeles), where the Walk had first begun in 1950. With nothing holding be back, I thrived under the discipline, which was required, changing practically overnight. Now I know that I was merely becoming very, very psychic, but at the time I believed that all of the changes were due to the Holy Spirit, that these were gifts God had given. Many could see auras, became very sensitive to the invisible world of the spirit. We learned how to control the spirit forces around others. The oneness we had was very real, losing our individuality, sacrificing all, whatever anyone needed in the way of money, food, time. It seemed like I had finally found the purpose I had been looking for.

Then all the dreams were shattered. When I went to visit my parents on Christmas Day, 1977, who should show up but my old "friend," Ted Patrick. I tried to call the girls at home, but the phone had been disconnected. I ran to get my keys and my purse had been taken. I had been tricked. Patrick had two other young men with him and they forced me into a car and took me to my sister's house in San Diego. I fought, of course, but it was useless against so many. I was confined in a bedroom with all the doors locked and all the windows boarded up and Patrick's goons with me day and night. Patrick himself would work on me about ten hours a day, arguing, trying to get me to react. But I knew his method too well. After two weeks, there had been no sign of change and they started talking about taking me to Texas or Connecticut, somewhere away from my parents where I "wouldn't have things so easy."

However, the turning point came when another couple came to see me. They also had been in the Walk, leaving after a scandal involving a non-existent gold and silver mine in Nevada. It was a long story. Many thousands of dollars had been lost, including $75,000 of their own. They shared many things with me, including how the Walk was occultic rather than spiritual. They proved in the Scriptures that the Walk was not what it said it was. The next night they came back, but I had already made the decision to leave.

It has not been easy to leave the Walk by any stretch of the imagination, nor have I fully made the transition yet. Another friend of mine who had left the Walk said to me, "You don't realize how deeply you've been hurt." He was speaking about himself, but it applied very much to me also, and I believe to anyone who has left the Walk. The disillusionment was total. I was able to

see it clearly when I remembered a dream I had had in 1974. Quite suddenly, an incident took place, which shook the Walk from top to bottom. For a while, it was quite violent and there was confusion everywhere with all the people being scattered in all directions. Then it settled down and everybody seemed to float away. One person said, "Oh well, it was a good thing while it lasted." Others drifted ethereally away. I was totally lost, devastated. One girl wandered by whom I had known many years and who had come into the Walk with me. She was dressed in long, black flowing robes. I grabbed her, saying "But Susan, where do we go now? This was IT! If this isn't it, what else could there possibly be?" But she just stared at me and drifted off into nothingness.

It is difficult for anyone who hasn't been in the Walk to understand how anything could take such total control of your every thought and feeling. The deep hurt surfaces at the most unusual times and places. Recently, I read one chapter in my anthropology book and was overcome with deep crying for hours. It is difficult to study, to concentrate, to relate to people again. One thing I always have to watch for very carefully is the Walk tendency to create division and contention, planting seeds of criticism and suspicion instead of the true Biblical principles of love and unity. It was also difficult for awhile not to continue using the techniques of psychic control and manipulation of others. I am positive that I have not discovered all the areas of my life that have been affected. That is not something that can be done overnight.

The Church of the Living Word

by Woodrow Nichols

UPDATE: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1983)

The Church of the Living Word, known by its members as The Walk, is a millennial movement founded in southern California during the 1950s by John Robert Stevens. In spite of its obvious vulnerability to valid criticism and internal conflict, The Walk still enjoys a modest level of growth which peaked in 1973-77 when it added 50 new congregations for a total of 100 in the U.S. and Canada. Like hundreds of other founders of Christian aberrations in the U.S., Stevens began in a local congregation, developed novel interpretations of the Bible, and infused his teachings with heterodox ideas gleaned from various occult sources. Stimulated by the '605 Jesus revolution in California, his congregation began a strong evangelism campaign which encouraged Stevens to develop his creative theology – theology that moved away from the charismatic perspectives that once attracted and nurtured him.

The Pentecostal/charismatic movement has viewed Stevens's pre-Walk education and ordination with reservation. When he was 20 years old, Stevens attended. three semesters at Life Bible College in Los Angeles. He helped develop the Christian Tabernacle School in Daytona, Ohio in 1943 and shortly thereafter pastored a small church in Oklahoma which later affiliated with the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. Whereas that denomination ordained Stevens in 1947, they soon revoked their decision under pressure from Stevens's educators at Life Bible College (who are in possession of those ordination papers). Stevens then affiliated with the Assemblies of God, a large Pentecostal denomination. They had a doctrinal dispute with Stevens in 1950, however, and relieved him of his pastorate.

Stevens appears to be undaunted by those reproofs from three Pentecostal institutions, and when interviewed by a *Sacramento Union* newspaper reporter, claimed to hold a »theology doctorate« from Chicago Bible School. That school no longer exists, if indeed it ever did. There are no records of its existence. Likewise, Stevens's early history has not evoked qualms from The Walk members, whose interests are in a theology that relies, not on past history, but on creating new history.

Members of The Walk believe that within their lifetimes a new spiritual kingdom will arrive. in two stages: the spiritual return of Jesus (manifested only in the bodies of Walk members) and the subsequent literal physical return of Jesus. Jesus' spiritual return can be seen in Walk members' gradual transition from earthly bodies to resurrection bodies; that is, increasing degrees of controlling spirits and developing ESP and occult powers. When clothed in their resurrection bodies, Walk members will be known as the manifest sons of God and the manchild company, names derived from Isaiah 66 and Revelation 12. That transformation is not automatically accomplished by Jesus, however. The Walk believes that it can occur only for eschatological believers associated with a leader who possesses an apostolic ministry, namely, Stevens. Stevens has said he cannot be transformed unless he is supported by truly spiritual people.

Thus, a push me-pull me theology emerges which is heartily endorsed by The Walk and defended with allegorical interpretations of Scripture. In one church meeting, a Walk elder affirmed Stevens as "the first fruits ministry. Unless he dies daily and is resurrected everyday, the Body of Christ does not come forth. We must intercede 24 hours to bring forth the man of God, the first fruits ministry." Stevens nodded his head approvingly. "That's true. That's true."

The Walk's spiritual intercession includes vigorous shouting prayers, using metaphors associated with military battles, slaughter, and victory. Stevens once encouraged that aggressive spirituality by saying, "So, can you see there's a war going on? Now, you say, 'I don't go for the violence.' You better go for it, because this is a time of violence" (2 January 1977).

Stevens's so-called apostolic ministry is verified for Walk members through the successful spiritual warfare which Stevens periodically describes, such as spiritually conquering demons and evil Nephilim spirits, developing occult powers and extrasensory perception, exercising the authority to judge and condemn people (Robert Kennedy and David Rockefeller, for example), perceiving spiritual vibrations around the human body (aura reading), and experiencing burning sensations in his right hand when he's engaged in spiritual activities. AU of those signs testify that Stevens is acquiring his resurrection body. Those early developments have later been accompanied by The Walk's belief in reincarnation, third-eye perception, and yoga.

The occult beliefs and practices have been defended by The Walk on the authority of God's special revelation called the *rhema,* a Greek term for word. The *rhema,* delivered by »Apostle of Apostles« Stevens and other junior apostles, is direct revelation from God that introduces new ideas for the coming age. In 1979 Stevens claimed to break into the coming kingdom and began bringing Walk members into it so they could completely receive their resurrection bodies and full spiritual powers. That victorious era was accompanied by two difficulties, however, which have diminished the value of such an achievement.

First, in order to finance the kingdom's advance, The Walk invested in several financial enterprises – painting equipment, mobile homes, and a gold-silver mine. Whereas there was a ready market for the painting equipment firm, the mobile home business collapsed during the recession in the early '70s and the precious metals mine failed. Writer Woodrow Nichols has documented that The Walk congregations invested $1 million in the Western Ore Reduction Company (formed by Stevens, his daughter, and son-in-law, Richard Helphand). But those congregations received no return profit or material on their investment. Two holding companies, created by The Walk to recover those lost funds, failed, and as correspondence between responsible parties reveals, illegal financial activities were committed. Thus far the only person convicted of grand theft is the man who arranged the mining procedures in behalf of Stevens arid his family.

Second, Martha Stevens (the apostle's ex-wife) filed for and was granted a divorce. The grounds for the divorce included her concern that some members of Stevens's movement were praying for her death and that the apostle openly claimed to be spiritually married to another woman in the congregation.

Such events take their toll on a religious movement, even if it has initiated a new heavenly kingdom on earth. That The Walk was not extinguished by those events, however, testifies to the charismatic personality of John Robert Stevens and members' belief in their special eschatological role in history as God's indispensable vanguard. An examination of The Walk's progressive theology is incomplete without discussing the basis of authority for that theology, namely, the *rhema*.

(Adapted from a 256-page report by Woodrow Nichols)

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http://www.theonet.net/update/update-v7-i1-83/The_Church_of_the_Living_Word.html

The Occult Metaphysics of John Robert Stevens

by Woodrow Nichols

UPDATE: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1983)

The Walk of John Robert Stevens, popularly known as The Church of the Living Word, is a movement animated by extreme belief in a doctrine currently permeating large influential segments of the American charismatic movement.[1] It is the doctrine of the *rhema* (the alleged "living word" that replaces the static revelation of Scripture), a doctrine clearly antithetical to the orthodox Christian view of revelation. When presented as the core of Christian belief and severed from the influence of other Christian beliefs, it very well could be a preview of the erroneous antichrist spirituality the New Testament warns will characterize the world religion at the end of this age.[2]

The doctrine of the *rhema* has become an expressway for the introduction of new age Gnosticism in to the beliefs and practices of otherwise sincere charismatic Christians. Appropriately, I have termed that error »Holy Spiritism«--an attempt to inject hardcore occult spiritism and Eastern mysticism[3] into radical charismatic Christianity. In its most uninhibited state, Holy Spiritism is fully incarnated in The Walk of John Robert Stevens.

Whereas The Walk's obvious Scripture-twisting and traditional cult dynamics have already been analyzed, mainly in sociological terms,[4] study of the group's spiritual dynamics has been virtually neglected. But it is precisely because of those spiritual dynamics that The Walk has such ominous eschatological implications. This paper addresses that topic, concentrating solely upon the spiritual dynamics of the *rhema.*

I define spiritual dynamics as the moral forces produced in human relations based on humanity's obedience or disobedience to objective revelation from God. In other words, just as physical laws, which scientists seek to discover and define, govern the physical sphere of this universe, so spiritual laws, which were fully revealed to Moses in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-22), govern the spiritual sphere. Within a Christian metaphysical worldview, the Holy Bible is upheld as objective revelation from the only true God, the Creator of the cosmos. The Bible, therefore, will be the scientific tool by which we will measure the spiritual dynamics of the *rhema* within the historical context of The Walk.

The Rhema

What exactly is The Walk's doctrine of the *rhema?* Specifically, it is the existentially *spoken* word of God (vis-a-vis the charisms, or gifts, of the Holy Spirit) that contains the aspects of both revelational speaking, as in prophecy, and speaking in faith, as in positive confession.[5] The Walk also defines *rhema* in contrast to the logos, or *written* word of God, the Bible. Charismatic extremists believe the *rhema* is equal in authority to the logos. If that view were all there were to it, we could just dismiss it as another, albeit radical, view of inspiration. The doctrine of *rhema* in The Walk, however, has been elevated in value above the core truths of Christianity. It has

also been used to justify the notion of progressive, authoritative revelation that exhibits characteristics of classic occultism.

For example, The Walk members chant certain phrases, known as »violent intercession,« that are used as weapons in what they perceive as a spiritual battle with satanic powers that prevent Stevens, their apostle, from reaching higher levels of revelation and thus coming into the perfect state. I recorded such phrases during the prelude to the service held at Grace Chapel (the original Walk church) on 9 July 1978. Examples include:

> We resist the Devil and everything that would stand against your (Jesus') perfect victory!
>
> Yes, lord! We demand it, lord Jesus!
>
> Everything that would be a hindrance to the apostolic ministry, we loose it tonight!
>
> We declare tonight, lord, that we're not going to be part of this age....that tonight Brother Stevens would be released to a new level....Lord, that tonight is just one more progressive step for each one of us, in the name of the lord!
>
> We rebuke all passivity!
>
> We have the right tonight!
>
> We prophesy the release of the word *(rhema)* tonight! We prophesy the release of the word and authority! We declare the man of God is not alone tonight!...we loose the word tonight!

The occult metaphysics are revealed in the chanting, especially in such phrases as declare, loose, rebuke, and prophesy, where the will of the person, not the will of God, is in command.

But the orthodox New Testament definition of *rhema* is the literal Greek meaning – "that which is spoken (as in) an utterance, a saying, or a word of any kind, in either speech or writing (or as) a thing, a matter, or a business." As such it is used almost interchangeably with logos – "a spoken word (as in) a saying or statement" – Implying the full expression of a thought.

If there is any real theological distinction among the New Testament writers between *rhema* and logos, it is not apparent. Consider, for example, 1 Peter 1:23-25:

> Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word (logos) of God, which liveth and abideth forever. Because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word *(rhema)* of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word *(rhema)* which by the gospel was preached unto you[6] (parentheses mine).

Some commentators have chosen to make a theological distinction between those two words, however, giving the heterodox charismatics mistaken encouragement in their radical

interpretation. For example, the New Testament Greek expositor W. E. Vine makes this distinction in his famous dictionary:

> The significance of *rhema,* as distinct from *logos,* is exemplified in the injunction to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word *(rhema)* of God," Ephesians 6:17; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture[7] (parentheses mine).

Unfortunately, outside of his own preference for defining the logos as the "whole Bible," he gives no defense for that distinction, and there is no internal scriptural evidence to support it.

The Assemblies of God, who are noted for their charismatic leanings, have an official statement on the *rhema* which clearly states that

> ...the distinction is not justified by usage in the Greek New Testament or in the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament). The words are used synonymously in both. In the case of the Septuagint, both *rhema* and *logos* are used to translate the one Hebrew word *dabar* which is used in various ways relative to communication. For instance, the word *dabar* (translated, word of God) is used in both Jeremiah 1:1 and 2. Yet in the Septuagint it is translated *rhema* in verse 1 and *logos* in verse 2.[8]

In the face of that scriptural ambiguity and the counsel of that large charismatic denomination, many charismatic extremists still choose to follow Vine's distinction. Their radical interpretation gives them a supposed authority for creating revelation. Although Vine limited his concept of the *rhema* to individual passages of the logos brought to mind by the Spirit, the radical charismatics leave it totally unbound to any objective authority.

A historical survey[9] of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement suggests that that interpretation of *rhema* evolved and has subsequently been accepted among so many charismatics as the result of both inner and outer controversies. Inner, in that the radicals needed a rationalization in their struggle with those charismatics who stressed the absolute authority of the Bible as the only source for doctrine and practice. Outer, in that a credible doctrine was needed in their struggle with anti-charismatics to assert that the charisms did not die out with the gradual acceptance of the New Testament canon within orthodox Christianity.

The doctrine of the *rhema* came into prominence only at the end of World War II, and many charismatics jumped on the bandwagon. One of those was John Robert Stevens.

Christian Sorcery

John Robert Stevens is distinct among all other adherents of the *rhema* in that he was the first one to openly acknowledge and explore the occult potential of that doctrine. In fact, it was at the height of one of the most divisive controversies in Pentecostal history--the Latter Rain Movement of 1948[10] – that he inaugurated The Walk which, from its inception in 1950 onward, was meant to be distinguished from everything prior to it as the next progressive step of

revelation.[11] As part of his new revelational system, Stevens began training his disciples in a "school of the prophets" to enable them to manipulate the spirit realm by their word of faith, an application of the *rhema.*

In a magical/occult worldview, words are discrete entities that have power that corresponds to their kind and use. When spoken according to certain formulas (spells) by those with gnosis (knowledge), it is believed those words have creative power to affect both the spiritual and physical spheres of existence.[12] Similarly, the person who possessed that gnosis--who could speak the words of power--was known in the Old Testament as a seer-prophet. It is more than coincidence, then, that that is precisely the ministry emphasized among adherents of The Walk.

A classic Old Testament case of the seer-prophet ministry is that of Balaam (Numbers 22:1-24:25). In the ancient biblical world, one special man was universally regarded as having the power to bless or curse anything, including the nation of Israel. Balaam is the prototype of the magus, the person who can bend time and space according to his will through his secret supernatural wisdom.[13] As the »Apostle of the Kingdom,« Stevens has adopted that role. Both he and his followers believe he has the power to bless or curse, judge or forgive anyone on earth, including institutions and governments. Ex-members have testified during private interviews that Stevens used that supposed power to pray for the deaths of Robert Kennedy and David Rockefeller and claimed that his power was effective in the case of the former. Not even a strained definition of biblical apostolic authority or prophecy includes that type of prayer. Rather, such prayers are w hat is traditionally known as sorcery, or witchcraft, which I have defined elsewhere as:

> ...the use of magic and/or divination for the purpose of knowing or controlling the course of nature, events, or the lives of others by means of a supernatural agency (i.e., a demon) Therefore, witchcraft is the casting of spells (words of power) with occult wisdom *(gnosis)* by the power of demons.[14]

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 gives the basic criterion for prophesying in the name of the Lord; namely, whether or not the prophecy comes true. If it does, it is from God. That passage must be balanced, however, by the counsel in Deuteronomy 13:1-5 that any prophecy--including dreams, signs, or visions--that does come to pass, but which leads to the worship of other gods (thus directly weakening and breaking the first three commandments), is not from God even though it did come true. It is interesting and crucial to note further that the criterion in Deuteronomy 18:20-22 is in direct relationship to the forbidding of pagan practices by the people of God.

Unfortunately, those proscriptions have not checked The Walk's advocates of the *rhema.* To them the *rhema* is at least equal in authority to the logos {Scripture). Many even believe the logos cannot be properly understood without the *rhema.* That has the added effect of making the *rhema* greater than the logos. Such a development is fully foreseen in the New Testament {for example, 1 John 4:1-3). Pseudo-Christian prophets were prophesying in the name of Jesus, but their doctrines were clearly divorced from the authoritative doctrines revealed by the Apostles. Thus, John sets up a criterion {based on the Deuteronomy texts) for the New Testament Church. Any prophecy that contradicts the Apostles' testimony to Jesus is from the spirit of antichrist.

Furthermore, the doctrine of the *rhema* parallels the false promise of the serpent to Eve in the Garden of Eden. If Eve would only eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she would receive the occult gnosis and be equal with God (Genesis 3:1-6). The *rhema* establishes humanity's godhood by divorcing them from their servant-creature position, raising them to full autonomy, and breaks the first three of the Ten Commandments. The false inspiration from the serpent (outside the clearly revealed word of God to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17) sets the spiritual dynamics of disobedience into motion, leaving Adam and Eve to the temporary delusion of their own autonomous ethical system. That brings us to the crux of our analysis: the contrast between servanthood, as exemplified in Jesus' life on earth, and sorcery, as exemplified in the doctrine of the *rhema*. In fact, the distinction between the two clearly defines orthodoxy from heterodoxy, true Christianity from antichrist Christianity.

Through gnosis a sorcerer is able to cast spells, words of power, that bind spirits to serve the purposes of his or her will. Here the relationship between humanity and spirits is clear: the human will plays the role of God, the spirits play the role of servant. The ideology behind Christian-oriented sorcery is based on the creative power of God's word, the logos, as revealed in the Genesis creation account: God spoke through his wisdom and brought things into existence. The Walk's *rhema* is but a subtle attempt to introduce classical sorcery into Christianity by assuming powers to create, both spiritually and physically, one's own realities.

When human will intentionally takes the place of God's revealed will in Christian affairs, the Holy Spirit is usurped. The prophet Samuel told King Saul that type of rebellion was equivalent to witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). That rebellion is fully manifested in The Walk, where Stevens is believed to have a blank check from God, regardless of whether he uses his authority for good or evil. (It is commonly believed in the charismatic movement that the gifts of God are given permanently, which is a misreading of Romans 11:29.) It is also believed that Stevens has the power to transfer his authority, by the laying on of hands, to whosoever he chooses. Thus, any declaration made by him in the name of the spirit he allegedly commands (in the name of Jesus) gives him that Balaamite power.

Such is not the case in true Christian spirituality, as is shown in such passages as John 5:19 where Jesus reveals that even though he is equal with God, he (as a man) has submitted his will to doing the will of God--a fact made even more clear in his final agony in Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; and Luke 22:39-46). That clearly applies to use of the charisms of the Holy Spirit as well. When the Spirit descended at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), the Apostles and disciples spoke »as the Spirit gave them utterance.« Nowhere is any indication given that God's people have been given the authority to command spirits at their own will. In fact, the Epistle of James states that the reason much of what people pray for does not come to pass (regardless of whether or not it is prayed for in faith) is because »ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts« (James 4:3). That verse clearly balances James' previous statement that any prayer will be answered if it is prayed without any doubt (James 1:5-6): Even Jesus' statement that anything asked for in his name will be answered (John 14:14) is put into context in 1 John 5:14: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.”

The New Testament is clear: the Holy Spirit's will is supreme in the Church (John 16:7-11). How can he accomplish his goals if the Church, which he is supposed to enlighten and empower, usurps his authority? There is no true role for the Church outside of the will of the Holy Spirit. Usurping his will leads only to false Christianity.

That is why Simon Magus is so harshly treated by the Apostle Peter in Acts 8:18.24. Magus tries to buy the power to give the Holy Spirit, by the laying on of hands, to whosoever he wills. The New Testament is clear: God is the master, we are the servants. Anything that usurps that hierarchy is sorcery.

Strong Delusion

In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 the Apostle Paul discusses the spiritual dynamics involved in rejecting the truth of the gospel (as opposed to The Walk's *rhema)* as a warning to those already in the household of faith: "And for this cause (because they received not the love of the truth) God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." As in the passages mentioned earlier,[15] Jesus gives ample warning (recorded in Mark 13:22) of the false teaching and leaders who will come on the scene in the end times: "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders (as in false charisms) to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (parentheses mine). It would appear that that antichrist Christianity is ordained by God to separate the wheat from the chaff within Christianity at the end of this age. That may come as a great surprise to those who believe that the antichrist will be the enemy of Christianity. As we see here, he is the enemy of only true Christianity. If he were not to come in the sheepskin of Christianity, it is hard to see how he could deceive the very elect.

That becomes even more apparent when we examine those passages in the New Testament that directly mention the term antichrist; namely, 1 John 2:18, 22 and 4:3 and 2 John 7. It is clear in those verses that what John identifies as the antichrist Christianity of the last days is movement away from orthodoxy as the result of false revelations (perhaps as the result of an early first-century *rhema-like* doctrine). That idea is proposed by Raymond E. Brown, a leading authority on the Johannine documents.

> Could the secessionist prophets and teachers who claimed to speak by the Spirit justify their roles by appealing to the Johannine tradition that we know through the Fourth Gospel? The Spirit appears prominently in many NT books, but the personal role of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel under the title of "Paraclete" is unique It is the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who teaches the believer everything (14:26), and guides the believer along the way of all truth (16:13). And it is the Paraclete who bears witness to Jesus in coordination with the Johannine believer (15:25-26). Presumably the secessionist prophet or teacher would justify his christological proclamation in terms of such Spirit-guided witness that is very much a part of the Johannine tradition.[16]

Those who had left orthodoxy were appealing to Johannine traditions even though their interpretation of them (based on their revelations from a spirit) differed from John's interpretation. It is for that reason that John sets up his criterion for discernment of spirits in 1

John 4:1-3: any revelation that contradicts the plain orthodox meaning of the Bible is of the antichrist, no matter whose name it is uttered in, no matter how much faith the speaker has.

Word of Power sorcery, like radical uses of the *rhema*, is clearly identified with the doctrines of Balaam in such New Testament passages as 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11, and Revelation 2:14. Those texts speak of false prophets within Christianity itself. The doctrine of the *rhema*, therefore, could very well be a false prophet's first taste of strong delusion.

John Robert Stevens and The Walk's occult interpretation of the Greek New Testament word *rhema* justifies practices commonly associated with Balaam and makes the power of God subject to their desires. The Spirit of God is subject to The Walk members because they so closely identify themselves with God that practical distinctions between the two are unnecessary. Consequently, there is no attachment to biblical theology or biblical authority; both are jettisoned in favor of occult spiritual dynamics that lead to the divinity of humanity.

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Physical Signs in the Body

At the "school of the prophets," Stevens's disciples learn how to develop spiritual perception. Sensations in certain parts of their bodies help them interpret their spirituality, as well as others'. The school's materials list those signs as:

Top of the head: Spirit reaching to God. This is where the human spirit is.

Back of the head: Emotions--pressure and tension in relationship to the Lord and people. If you get a pressure, it's connected with submission to the Lord. A warm presence means submission is good.

Temples: Heavy pressure means satanic invasion. Light pressure means you are anointed to absorb the word.

Ears: Warm feeling means God is speaking to them. Pressure means you are under a deceptive spirit.

Eyes: Feeling across eyes means spiritual blindness.

Genitals: Sign of creative life, God is going to bring forth something creative in your life.

Hands: A pain in the palm means the work of the cross. A warmth in the palm is a sign of sonship.

Tip of nose: A sign of burning means the person is a worshiper.

Stevens also teaches his disciples how to interpret auras (a field of color that seems to surround a person). The following color key is used to discern what spirit a person has:

Red: Rebellion.

Black: Death {they are spiritually dead)

Brown: Stubbornness, religious spirit

Yellow: A sick yellow means perversion (either sexual or perverting the truth)

Green: Life giving

White: Pure

Blue: Heavenly

Gold: Divinity (the presence of God)

Purple: Royalty

People in The Walk are constantly making signs with their hands and bodies and building up their auras either to prevent psychic attack or to secure blessing.

Notes:

1. This paper is not to be construed as an anti-charismatic diatribe. I believe I qualify as a charismatic Christian, having either experienced or witnessed most of the charisms listed in the New Testament. In fact, I consider this paper an exercise in the charism of the discernment of spirits.

2. For example, see Mark 13:5-6, 19-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Peter 1:1-22; 1 John 2:18-19 (the first direct reference to antichrist in the New Testament), 4:1-3; 2 John 7; Jude 4-19; and Revelation 13:11-18.

3. See Brooks Alexander, "Occult Philosophy and Mystical Experience" (Berkeley: Spiritual Counterfeits Project) and J. Isamu Yamamoto, "Eastern Mysticism," *Pergamum Fifth Column,* Summer 1980.

4. See Ronald Enroth, *The Lure of the Culls* (Chapaqua, NY: Christian Herald Books, 1979); Walter Martin, »The Church of the Living Word« in *The New Cults* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1980); Eric Pement, "The Walk," *Cornerstone, Nov/Dec* 1981; and "John Robert Stevens and the Church of the Living Word ('The Walk')," SCP *Newsletter,* September 1976.

5. The nine charisms listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are accepted by the majority of charismatics. They are the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, works of power (miracles), prophecy, the discernment of spirits. tongues (glossolalia). and the interpretation of tongues. The five charismatic ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11--apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher--are also accepted.

The problem among charismatics occurs over the precise biblical interpretation of the nature, role, and authority of those charisms in the contemporary Church. The doctrine of the rhema--though currently in vogue in many circles--is still controversial, being largely denied by the older, more orthodox charismatic denominations. For

example, see “The 'shepherding Movement' Examined in the Light of Scripture,” *Pentecostal Evangel,* 12 December 1976 and “The Believer and Positive Confession”, *Pentecostal Evangel,* 16 November 1980.

6. Unless otherwise noted, I am using the King James Version of the Bible, because it is the one adopted by most *rhema* adherents.

7. W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, V A: MacDonald Pub. Co., no date), p. 1253.

8. “The Believer and Positive Confession,” loc. cit., p. 19.

9. For an excellent historical survey of the impact of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement in 20th-century America, see Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1967); David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible* (Bloomingdale, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975); Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. House, 1972); Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1976); Richard Michael Riss, "The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 and the Mid-Twentieth Century Awakening" (Vancouver, BC: unpublished Regent College thesis, April 1979); and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971).

10. From the beginning of the tongues movement at the dawn of this century, every major revival has been hailed as the “latter rain,” a concept based mainly upon Hosea 6:3, Joel 2:23, and Zechariah 10:1. The idea of the former and latter rain in those passages is interpreted prophetically to encompass the original outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 16-21)--the former rain--and the last great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the end of this age, usually referred to as the “restoration” or the “renewal”--the latter rain. The Latter Rain Movement of 1948 which came out of Canada (spawned in Vancouver by William Branham, a controversial mediumistic-healer and cabalistic mystic who helped popularize the healing movement and the doctrine of the *rhema)* is distinguished from all the others for, instead of expanding Pentecostalism (as most other movements before it), it split it nearly in half. It was one of the main forces in the creation of the largely independent charismatic movement led by such diverse figures as Oral Roberts and Demos Shakarian of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, one of the main bastions of the doctrine of the *rhema* today. For a full account see Riss (footnote 9).

11. After being asked to resign from the Assemblies of God in 1950 for introducing latter-rain ideology (for example, the ministries of apostle and prophet, personal- directive prophecy through the laying on of hands, singing in tongues--all of which are interlocked with the doctrine of the *rhema*), Stevens formed The Walk. Going one step further than the Latter Rain Movement and the charismatic renewal, he announced himself as not just a restored New Testament apostle but as *the* “Apostle of Kingdom,” the most important eschatological figure in biblical history next to the Lord Jesus. During the early '60s, Stevens began to introduce classical occult philosophy, Eastern mysticism, and witchcraft to the elders of The Walk (I have private tapes on file of many of those meetings, as well as taped interviews from ex-leaders and members). That led eventually, at the beginning of the Jesus movement, to the establishment of a “school of the prophets,” where everyone in The Walk could learn the spiritual technology of manipulating the spirit world through occult gnosis. For detailed accounts of The Walk's beliefs, see footnote 4.

12. For an excellent survey of this view, see the following works of Richard Cavendish: *The Black Arts* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1967); *A History of Magic* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1977); and *The Encyclopedia of the Unexplained: Magic, Occultism, and Parapsychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974). see also Edwyn Bevan, *Sibyls and seers: A Survey of some Ancient Theories of Revelation and Inspiration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1929); E.M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1948); *Ritual Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1949); *The Fortunes of Faust* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952); Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough,* abridged ed. (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1922); Alfred Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination Among the Hebrews and Other Semites* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1938); and Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973).

13. As Robert S. Ellwood, Jr. defines him in *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1973), p. 51.

The magus, with his personal mystery, is an exemplary figure potentially the center of a cult type of group. He is a personified symbol of the »otherness« which the cultist seeks to lay hold of for himself. The magus appears like one who has been through ultimate transformation, yet is visible here.

See also Woodrow Nichols, "The Magus in Fact and Fiction" *Pergamum Fifth Column,* Winter/spring 1980 and "The Pergamum Fifth Column Glossary of Terms: A Prospective Christian Metaphysical World View", *Pergamum Fifth Column,* Summer 1980.

14. Nichols, ibid., p. 10.

15. See footnote 2.

16. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 139.

[no. 224]

http://www.theonet.net/update/update-v7-i1-83/The_Occult_Metaphysics_of_John_Robert_Stevens.html

Church of the Living Word – The Walk

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